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THE REV: COXE FEARY.

Born May, 29, 1759, Died April, 22, 1822.

Engraved by F. Cooper from an Original Painting, in the Possession of Mrs. Feary.

FACSIMILE OF FRONTISPIECE TO JOHN AUDLEY'S LIFE OF COXE FEARY. 1829.

A CENTURY

OF

VILLAGE NONCONFORMITY

AT BLUNTISHAM, HUNTS.

1787 TO 1887.

WITH INTRODUCTORY SKETCHES OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES.

BY

R. W. DIXON.

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PRINTED AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.
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To my Friends in Bluntisham and its neighbourhood, who have been and are connected with the Congregational Meeting-House there, I give this Memorial of "One Hundred years of Village Nonconformity."

ROBERT WALKER DIXON.

May 25th, 1887.

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CHAPTER I.

Bluntisham-cum-Earith.

The village of Bluntisham-cum-Earith, in Huntingdonshire, is situated on the left bank of the river Ouse, on the borders of the Cambridgeshire Fens. Earith is on the low ground, where its neat respectable looking houses fringe either side of the high-road leading to the bridge which crosses the Ouse. Here was the ancient ford through the river and the causeway across the marshy ground leading on to the Isle of Ely. The Romans appear to have thrown up earthworks at this point as a protection from marauders by river, having their settlement in the more healthy district of their Colonia—the Colne of our day.

When the neighbouring country depended on water carriage for its coal and other supplies, Earith must have been a place of importance, of which the wharves, now fallen into disuse, are evidence.

Antiquarians will be interested in the Roman Camp, usually called the Bulwark, on the left of the road, between the river Ouse and the Old Bedford cutting. In 1826, in a ditch dividing the meadows lying between Earith and the church, was found a bronze statuette inlaid with silver, of a Roman Jupiter Martialis, in nearly perfect preservation.

Botanists will be interested in knowing that a few years ago the "water-soldier" (*Stratiotes aloides*), now almost extinct, grew in pools about these marshes. The adder's-tongue fern grows on the river banks. The water-violet, the fringed water-lily, and the yellow loose-strife abound in and about the river.

Bluntisham stands on the high ground which slopes on the east and south to the border of fen land through which the river flows.

The soil varies in fertility. Its substratum is Oxford clay, in which are found gypsum, gryphites, belemnites, ammonites, and fossil wood. The surface of the Oxford clay is diversified with deposits of boulder-clay, patches of gravel which appear to belong to several different deposits, and alluvial soil.

The church is half a mile from the centre of the village of Bluntisham and the same distance from Earith; it stands alone on the brow of the high ground overlooking the border of fen land through which the river flows. Its architecture is chiefly of the perpendicular style, but it is distinguished by its picturesque chancel apse. The church forms a prominent object in the landscape, for it stands high with tower and spire, and it has witnessed all the events chronicled in this volume, which have taken place since the addition of its latest architecture just preceding the Reformation.

An event of importance to the village took place in 1815 when the enclosure of the parish was effected. By this the appearance of the land—that part of it which had remained up to this time unenclosed—was altered by the hedges planted for bounding the lands and defining ownerships. Owing to the increased area of arable land and its better cultivation, the population was increased, and

cottages with their gardens were added to the village in proportion.

The changes that affect the appearance of our country villages—those not situated in the mineral or manufacturing districts—are usually very gradual in their process. But tempest and fire respect not our slowly changing rural habits. The tremendous hurricane of September 1741, which at noon swept over Somersham and Bluntisham, lasting thirteen minutes, during eight of which it raged at its full violence, was within the memory of middle-aged people who were living in 1784 to 1787, when the congregational church was formed and the meeting-house was built. This terrible storm untiled the Rectory, demolished its stables, and destroyed twelve of the one hundred houses in Bluntisham; sixty empty barns, and all the mills in the track of the storm were blown down. Accompanying the storm was a mist reaching about thirty yards from the ground, which rolled along at the rate of one and a half miles a minute, with a noise like thunder.

Several fires have occurred during the last thirty years, which have somewhat changed the appearance of the village, leaving gaps and occasions for new buildings, and so the number of old-fashioned thatched houses has much decreased. Before these fires the majority of the houses were thatched and whitewashed. These irregular old-fashioned buildings, with their gabled roofs and windows with small leaden panes of glass, were picturesque and homelike. Sometimes they had overhanging stories, suggestive of ample shelter, and deep thatches suggesting a liberal home roof. There is a cosiness and restful appearance about the old English village homes that endear them to us greatly; they savour of the old times, when the inmates had leisure to ruminate, and enjoy intervals from

labour in reflection—when they were more anxious about the quality of their work than its quantity—when their nervous systems were not excited by telegrams, by the arrival of letters twice a day, or the struggle to catch the *first* post out—when a newspaper once a week was sufficient to keep them posted up in the news of the period—when the monthly periodical or the "quarterly" was a joy to look forward to, and a new book was an event for the year—when they felt they *could* read all the periodicals if they chose, but that three or four were sufficient—when there was time to read a good book through, and carefully to digest it. There was the old farm-house kitchen in which the dinner is over by half-past twelve, and by two o'clock the pewter is replaced clean and bright on the shelves, the distaff is plied and the spinning-wheel is whirring. Then they rose with the sun and went to bed with the birds. In godly households after supper is over the Scriptures are read: in the summer the setting sun streams through the open door, bathing in its soft light the generations next to pass away; or in the winter as they sit in the ample chimney corner in the quaint high-backed chairs flanked by younger generations on the oak settles, the firelight from the hearth wood fire gleams on the pewter on the shelves, and dances about the settles. Now is the time for the transmittal of household lore—traditions of troubled times, when the martyrs suffered under Philip and Mary, and the Puritans under the Stuarts, yet stood up bravely for purer religion and for liberty, especially for freedom from priestcraft. They talk of the time when the two thousand ejected ministers turned out of their pleasant homes into the wide world, and of Whitfield and the Wesleys, how they are turning the world upside-down by their earnest gospel preaching.

In telling the story of the rise and progress through a hundred years of the little church of Bluntisham, it will add to the interest of our story to relate the history of some of those movements which prepared the way for its commencement. Indeed they go to the making of the conditions necessary to its foundation.

CHAPTER II.

Puritanism.

The translation of the Bible into English by Wiclif, and its dissemination over the land, made an epoch in the religious history of our country, and the knowledge of the Scriptures prepared the way for the change in our national religion effected in the sixteenth century.

The teachings of Wiclif, by lip and pen, and by means of his itinerant preaching lay friars, prepared men's minds for the Reformation. The outward effects of the Reformation must have moved men in and about Huntingdonshire and set them thinking, even had the deeper questions involved in the change failed to do so; for by far the largest part of the lands of that district changed hands, passing from those of the great monastic institutions into those of laymen, and the numerous religious houses familiar to so many generations of Huntingdonshire men ceased to exist.

A change so important must have brought the whole question home to the minds of the people whose lives were troubled by the outward material changes wrought by the Reformation, as well as by the inner spiritual significance of the movement.

In their habits, inherited ideas, modes of thought, and ways of life, men are very conservative; they dislike

change, for most changes involve trouble, both physical and mental, the latter often perplexed and painful; moreover they have to overcome the wholesome dread of changing for the worse.

These mental efforts are especially troublesome, because of the difficulty of decision, and people consequently avoid making them. In the momentous matter of religion men found before the Reformation all their wants met, so far as those wants were recognised, by the same church which asserted her authority for defining them and limiting their extent. The machinery required to provide for their religious needs was around them, kept going by funds provided for the purpose, entirely independent of and apart from their own effort, and generation after generation had taken for granted that in this old order of things all religious requirements were met. It is true that with some of the more actively earnest minds it was not so, as with the Wiclifites and Lollards who had for more than a century testified against the existing state of things. But the Reformation, through its alienation of church lands, its dissolution of religious houses, and its change of religion, displaced the old order. Those of the old faith found their needs unsatisfied, and those of the reformed religion were to a large extent in the same difficulty, since many of the parish priests were too conscientious to change their religion and remain in their places, and from the scarcity of suitable men of the reformed faith many parishes were without ministers. Thus the people could no longer take for granted that their religion was provided for them, because the state, which had in a great measure substituted itself for the church, very inadequately provided compensation for the sweeping changes it had effected in the religious machinery

of the nation. These religious wants, felt, but not now met, roused the minds of men and set them thinking how these wants could be satisfied. In some places they formed themselves into independent religious communities, as at Bocking in Essex, and at Faversham in Kent, during the reign of Edward VI. In other places they combined to influence or supplement the state-church institutions, and when they deemed these totally inefficient they supplanted them. In this way the mode of supplying the religious wants was changed. From the accident of the times arose the necessity for voluntary support of religion, and to these voluntarily supported religious communities we are indebted in a great measure for the maintenance and transmission of real religion in England. What was at first regarded as an unfortunate necessity, has after two centuries of practice come to be regarded by a large part of our nation as a matter of principle, and its infringement even by endowment as prejudicial to the true interests of religion. Thus we slowly but effectually learn our lessons.

There is an interesting MS. in the British Museum of "Particulars of the Classies" holden at the Bull in Northampton entitled "Articles wherewith ye Ministers of Northam. and Warwick shires are charged etc. 16 July, 1590. 2 Item, some of the especiall places so appoynted for the Synodes, are—London, Cambridge at tymes of commencement and Sturbridge ffayre, and Oxford at the Act; beçause at those tymes and places they may assemble w^t^ least suspition."

"4 It'm, sondrie Ministers who mett in one or more Synodes assembled w^th^in a yeare and a halfe last past and lesse, concluded and agreed that everie man in his severall charge shoulde endevoure to erect a government

of Pastors, governinge Elders, and Deacons: That they shoulde teache and houlde that all ministers who are called accordinge to the order of the Churche of Englande to be an unlawfull, or have an unlawfull callinge: And that such allreadie beeinge ministers, as stand affected well unto their Courses, and whom they dare trust, shoulde be induced to renownce their former callinge by Bishopps, and to take a newe approbation by them in their Classis, beeinge an assemblie of sondrie ministers w^th^in a certayne compasse in a shyer, and whereof they have about iiij. in a shier, or so manye as convenientlye may be: And that this is the Lordes ordinance, wherebye onelye they must stande in theyr ministerie: and that the lyke approbation shal be used in those that were not ministers before: And that after such callinge, they that were not ministers afore, may preache untill they be called to some certayne charge. At what tyme if the people of such place call them, then are they to be holden full ministers, and may minister the sacraments. Never the lesse it is permitted, that y^is^ shall goe to the Bishoppe for writinge (for their safe standinge in theyr callinge) as unto a Civill magistrate in a matter belonginge onelye to the outwarde man, and none otherwise, ffor they holde, that thereby he receaveth not anye power to be a minister; or to lyke effect hath it bene concluded, or is practised amongest them."

"5 I'tm, in sondrie places of this realme such their determinations have been and are put in vse and practice: ...The sayde Snape renownced or woulde not stande in his ministerie by the callinge of the Bishoppe, and was agayne (as afore) allowed or called by the Classis; but woulde not thereupon administer the Lordes Supper. But afterwards the parishe of St. Peters afore sayde, or

some of them, knoweinge that by reason of such determination he might not accompte himself a full minister, untill some particulare congregation had chosen him; They did thereupon choose him for their minister; And by that callinge and as afore, doth he stande in his ministerie at this present, and not by the callinge of the Bishoppe."

"6 Item, one Larke not farre from Wellingboroughe in the sayde shier being not afore a minister accordinge to the churche of Englande had the approbation of the sayde Snape and others of a Classis upon tryall made of him: And then was by them willed for his safe standinge to goe to a Bishoppe (as to a Civill magistrate onelye) for writinge."

About the year 1572 the Bishop of Peterborough wrote to Lord Burleigh—"seeing the Puritan preachers are increased and wax bold—very bold and stout-like men, that seem to be not without friends." At this time Robert Browne, the leader of the Brownists or Independents, was living in the neighbouring county of Rutland. Evidently this neighbourhood was a trouble to the Bishops.

CHAPTER III.

Huntingdon, St Ives, and the Lecturers.

Let us see what further religious influences would be likely to touch the ancestors of the people of Bluntisham and its neighbourhood who formed themselves into the church there and founded this meeting-house a century ago.

Anthony Tuckney, D.D., Master and Regius Professor of Divinity, was born in 1599, and bred at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, of which College he was chosen Fellow. After preaching at Boston, he was called to London in 1643 by the Parliament, being one of two members chosen of the Assembly for the county of Lincoln; in which capacity he was much esteemed. It being then a dangerous time in the county by reason of the heat of the war, he took his whole family with him and never returned; though at the desire of the people, he kept the title to the Vicarage till the Restoration, but received none of the profits. In 1645 he was made Master of Emmanuel College, which required him to spend some months in the year at Cambridge; and in 1648 he returned with his family thither, and was that year Vice-Chancellor. In 1653 he was chosen Master of St John's, and afterwards Regius Professor. He was by virtue of this office Rector of Somersham in Huntingdonshire.

He was a man of very great humility; and yet few kept up more authority than he did in the University when Vice-Chancellor, or in the College he was Master of; to which many gentlemen and ministers sent their sons, merely upon his account. After the Restoration, provision was made by the Act for confirming and restoring ministers, that Dr Tuckney should be restored to his Rectory of Somersham; but he did not enjoy it long. He was one of the Commissioners at the Savoy, but was soon out of hopes of any accommodation. Before the time for the conferences was expired, he received a royal letter, professing great respect, signed by Secretary Nicholas, dated Jan. 1, which gave him a supersedeas from his public employment, promising him £100 per annum during life, to be paid by his successor. The good Doctor thought it would be to no purpose to contend with the court, and that he could not long keep his places as things were then managed: he therefore resigned them both; and had the annuity which was promised punctually paid for several years by Dr Gunning who succeeded him. He retired to London, and there preached sometimes in his own house, and occasionally in the families of several friends. During the plague he lived at Colwick Hall near Nottingham, where he was soon troubled, and confined in the house of Robert Pierrepoint, Esq.; but was there treated very civilly, and in a few months discharged. Upon the five-mile Act, he removed to Oundle and thence to Warmington in Northamptonshire. After the fire in London, in which his library was burnt, he removed into Leicestershire, and next to Tottenham, from whence in 1669 he removed to Spittle-yard, where he died in 1670 in the 71st year of his age. He had the character of an eminently pious and learned man, a true friend, an indefatigable student, a candid

disputant, and an earnest promoter of truth and godliness.

During some part of the interval between the years 1639 and 1645, Mr Richard Jennings, of Catharine Hall, Cambridge, lived in Huntingdonshire. He was born at Ipswich, and entered on his ministry in Northamptonshire in the year 1639, during which time he lived with "that excellent Christian Mrs Elms, noted for her hospitality to the Nonconformists." In 1645 he settled at Combe in Suffolk, and was ejected Aug. 24, 1662. He continued in the parsonage house till 1678, when he came to London. He spent the latter part of his life with three pious widows at Clapham, where he died Sept. 12, 1709. He was a man of unaffected piety; a considerable scholar; one of a good invention and a strong memory. He retained his juvenile learning in an advanced age, and was able to preach without notes at ninety-two. He passed through the world without noise and ostentation, and without even appearing in print.

About the year 1642, Mr Ferdinando Pool—who was born at Ulsthorpe in Leicestershire in 1596—settled in Huntingdonshire, being presented with the living of Great Catworth, worth about £130 per annum, where he lived for about seven years; yet such was his contempt for the world, such his affection for the good people of Thrumpton, and such his grateful respect to his good friend Mrs Piggot, that when the war was over, he voluntarily left his living, and returned to a much smaller allowance. Mrs Piggot of Thrumpton had by her interest and money sheltered him from the Bishop's courts for several years, and in her family his seven children had been born; he left her when the civil war broke out, settling in Huntingdonshire as one of the associated counties. He remained

at Thrumpton until Bartholomew day, 1662, when he was ejected. He died in 1676, aged upwards of eighty years. He was a man of great humility and sincerity, a true Nathanael without guile. He also possessed considerable ministerial abilities, he was particularly eminent in prayer, and had many remarkable answers to his prayers.

Early in the 17th century William Laud, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, was Archdeacon of Huntingdon, teaching the clergy that the Lord's Supper was a sacrifice, and the table an altar, a doctrine which necessitated the officiating "priest." Thus this test question of the Romish Church was brought prominently before the people of Huntingdonshire. John Williams, bishop of Lincoln, from his episcopal palace at Buckden, whither he had retired, being in disgrace with the court on account of his Puritan proclivities, resisted these first innovations on the reformed worship, and when the disciples of Laud began to remove the Communion tables from the body of the church or chancel, and place them altar-wise by the east window, so as if possible to convert them into altars, Bishop Williams told them it was contrary to the law of the Church of England, which in its Homilies warns us "to take heed lest our Communion become a sacrifice."

There must have been much of the Puritan spirit in Huntingdon, of which later in this century we have evidence in a letter written from the gaol at Ilchester by the Rev. Joseph Allein, an ejected minister from Taunton, and author of "An Alarm to the Unconverted," to his friends at Huntingdon. This letter is dated "from the prison at Juelchester October 29th, 1663," where he was confined together with six other ministers and fifty Quakers, who all had their lodgings in one room, the air of which became so offensive that they took out

the glass and removed some of the tiles from the roof.

At the Act of Uniformity in 1662 the Rev. Samuel Brooks, B.D., Fellow of Catharine Hall, Cambridge, was turned out for refusing to take the engagement. He was a learned man, a great school divine, and a laborious tutor, who always had a numerous company of pupils of good rank. He died on his own estate in Essex.

Stephen Marshal, the leader in the Smectymnuus controversy with Bishop Hall, was a native of Godmanchester. This celebrated book was written before the civil war in answer to Bishop Hall's "Divine Right of Episcopacy." It is curious that Huntingdon, where for a time Laud was Archdeacon, should have furnished several Puritan leaders, but perhaps we should rather regard it as the natural consequence.

In Archbishop Laud's Metropolitan Visitation, about 1634, his Vicar-General says: "At Huntingdon, divers ministers in that division were suspected of Puritanisme, but being questioned professed absolute conformitie." Prudent men!

Here Oliver Cromwell was born and brought up, and it was with the Puritans he delighted to associate. He invited the sturdy Nonconformists to his house, read the Scriptures and prayed with them there, and it is reported took his own turn at exhortation.

Carlyle says, "Oliver naturally consorted henceforth (1624) with the Puritan Clergy, in preference to the other kind; zealously attended their ministry when possible;—consorted with Puritans in general, many of whom were Gentry of his own rank, some of them Nobility of much higher rank. A modest devout man, solemnly intent, 'to make his calling and election sure,'—to whom in credible

dialect, the Voice of the Highest had spoken. Whose earnestness, sagacity and manly worth gradually made him conspicuous in his circle among such.—The Puritans were already numerous. John Hampden, Oliver's Cousin, was a devout Puritan, John Pym the like; Lord Brook, Lord Say, Lord Montague,—Puritans in the better ranks, and in every rank abounded. Already either in conscious act, or in clear tendency, the far greater part of the serious Thought and Manhood of England had declared itself Puritan."

Dr Beard was Master of the public school at Huntingdon, and Oliver Cromwell's schoolmaster. He wrote a book entitled "The theatre of God's judgments, by Thomas Beard, D.D., and preacher of the word of God in the Town of Huntingdon"; which he dedicated to the Mayor and burgesses, for several good reasons, one of them, "because Mr Mayor, you were my scholar and brought up in my house." Oliver Cromwell, in his first speech in Parliament made 11 Feb. 162$\frac{8}{9}$, said, "I have heard by relation from one Dr Beard, that Dr Alabaster has preached flat Popery at Paul's Cross, and that the Bishop of Winchester had commanded him as his Diocesan, he should preach nothing to the contrary." Whereupon it was ordered that Dr Beard of Huntingdon be written to by Mr Speaker, to come up and testify against the Bishop—the order for Dr Beard to be delivered to Mr Cromwell. But the king hastily interfered, and on Monday, the 2nd of March, 1629, Mr Speaker Finch was forcibly held down in his chair "till it pleased the house to rise"; while Parliament with locked doors, refusing egress or ingress even to the King's Usher, passed their three resolutions—then immediately vanished, for they understood the soldiery was coming. Probably Cromwell brought word to Dr Beard that he was not wanted now. On the

8th of July, 1630, Oliver Cromwell, Esquire, and Thomas Beard, D.D., were named Justices of the Peace for the Borough of Huntingdon.

At St Ives they had a Puritan Vicar—the Rev. Job Tookie, who for refusing to read the "Book of Sports" was ejected from the living. The Book of Sports was issued in the year 1618, though in deference to Archbishop Abbot's objections, it was not enforced; but under Laud, orders were issued in 1633 that it should be read in all the churches. This order when emphasised by the Bishops occasioned great trouble to the Puritan clergy. Mr Tookie's ejectment would probably date not later than this year, perhaps before. During Bishop Wren's episcopate at Ely thirty-one clergy were ejected owing to the Bishop's "articles" and refusal to comply with the order to read the Book of Sports. Mr Tookie, of St Ives' Vicarage, was the son of a minister, and his family had furnished several ministers in the past. He had a son Job, who was ejected under the Act of Uniformity in 1662. "He went to St Albans, where he was preacher in the Abbey, and gathered a Congregational Church, but the wideness of the place dimmed his voice. He had eminent ministerial gifts, which were well approved. Being persecuted he came to London in 1665, and lived in Bunhill fields, where great numbers about him died of the plague, but he and his were preserved. He took all opportunities to preach till his strength failed him. He was eminent for his gift in prayer, in which he was so happy in his expression and so pathetic in his supplication as warmed the hearts of his hearers and contributed not a little to the usefulness of his labours during the whole of his ministry." He died in London, Nov. 20th, 1670, aged 54 years. The persecutions of the Puritans of Laud's times are apt to be over-

looked, owing perhaps to the overwhelming numbers who suffered in 1662, and the subsequent years of persecution. Yet no inconsiderable number of Puritan clergy suffered for their nonconformity under Laud. One example shall be given. During Laud's London episcopate Thomas Shepard accepted the invitation to Earl's Colne in Essex to be "lecturer" there; the people desired he would remain with them longer than the three years, the usual term for the engagement of a lecturer. Shepard was not suffered to remain here unmolested. On the 16th Dec. he was summoned by Laud to appear before him in London.

Mr Shepard relates: "As soon as I came in the morning about 8 of the clock falling into a fit of rage he (Bp Laud) asked me what degree I had taken in the University. I answered him that I was Master of Arts. He asked of what College. I answered Emmanuel (Camb.). He asked how long I had been in his diocese. I answered three years and upwards. He asked who maintained me all this while, charging me to deal plainly with him, adding, withal, that he had been more cheated and equivocated with, by some of my malignant faction, than ever was man by Jesuit. At the speaking of which words, he looked as though blood would have gushed out of his face, and did shake as if he had been haunted by an ague fit, to my apprehension by reason of his extreme malice and secret venom. I desired him to excuse me. He fell then to threaten me and withal to bitter railing, calling me all to naught, saying, 'you prating coxcomb, do you think all the learning is in your brain?' He then pronounced his sentence thus. I charge you that you neither preach, read, marry, bury, nor exercise any ministerial function in any part of my diocese; for if you do and I

hear of it, I'll be upon your back and follow you wherever you go, in any part of the kingdom, and so everlastingly disable you! I besought him not to deal so in regard to a poor town. And here he stopped me in what I was going to say. 'A poor town! You have made a company of seditions, factions, bedlams; and what do you prate to me of a poor town?' I prayed him to suffer me to catechize on the Sabbath-day in the afternoon. He replied, 'Spare your breath, I'll have no such fellows prate in my diocese. Get you gone; and now make your complaint to whom you will.' So away I went, and blessed be God that I may go to *him!*" True to his word, Laud allowed him no rest at Earl's Colne; after several narrow escapes from the officers of the Star Chamber he retired to another place to friends in Essex, then to Keddon, five miles from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and other places. Still pursued and deprived of the means of support, he turned his thoughts to New England, and reached Boston in America, October, 1635, after a year's delay through various accidents.

With regard to the Lecturers, Carlyle tells us that in the year 1624 Dr Preston, a Puritan College Doctor, formed a plan for buying up such lay-impropriations as offered themselves, and by these supporting good ministers in destitute places. "The funds thus gained by subscriptions which the Doctor set on foot, were also used to defray the expenses of 'Lecturers' or Preachers, who having scruples about ceremonies, were not generally in priests' orders, but in 'Deacons'' or some other orders, and who had permission to 'lecture.' The wealthy merchants of London, almost all of them Puritans, took it up; and by degrees, the wealthier Puritans over England at large. These 'Lecturers' preached or lectured in market towns

on market-days; on Sunday afternoons for some idle or otherwise engaged Priest, or as 'running Lecturers,' now here, now there. They were greatly followed by the serious part of the community. Some years later these Lecturers had risen to such a height, that Dr Laud, now come into authority, took them seriously in hand, and with patient detail hunted them mostly out; nay, brought the Scoffers themselves, and their whole enterprise, into the Star Chamber, and there with emphasis enough, and heavy damages, amid huge rumour from the public, suppressed them." This was in 1633. Dr Wells was one of these "Lecturers" and so was poor Mr Shepard.

Another of these "Lecturers" was Mr John Pointer, who was born about the year 1599. "Left an orphan, his guardian was enabled to give him a liberal education by means of a very considerable estate left for that purpose. At the age of eighteen, he entered Oxford University and became a Canon at Brasenose College. He afterwards spent a year at Leyden. On returning he undertook a lecture at St Mildred's, Bread Street, London, where he preached twice every Lord's day. He was forced to quit this by the Incumbent, after carrying it on for two years. Afterwards he was called to be lecturer at Wootten-waven in Warwickshire; from whence he was forced to depart by the opposition of some Papists. He next obtained from the company of mercers in London a lecturer's place in Huntingdon, though he had eleven competitors." Mr Pointer was then apparently about thirty-one years old when he went to Huntingdon. He preached there on Saturday (the market day) for the benefit of the country people, and gave the town a sermon every Lord's-day in the great church, gratis. Some years afterwards, the lecture being supplied by neighbouring ministers, he

preached twice every Lord's-day. In this place he continued eleven years, till the troubles of the war forced him to London, whence he afterwards removed to Oxford with his family. Then for three years he had no stated employment, being unwilling to accept any sequestered living, though he had the offer of about twenty of that sort. At length he preached for Dr French in his turn at Whitehall. When the doctor died, without any seeking for it, Cromwell put him into the vacant canonry of Christ-Church, Oxford, making him promise that he would take as much pains in the ministry as he had done at Huntingdon; which he did, by preaching once in six weeks in the college, and every Lord's-day at St Thomas' church, gratis. He kept his turn also at St Mary's, and in four towns in the country. After the Restoration he was cast out, and he never preached afterwards; but visited the sick, whom he was "officious to serve." He was very studious; a grave preacher, and a man of considerable worth. He died Jan. 2, 1683, in his eighty-fourth or eighty-fifth year.

In the year 1631 Oliver Cromwell, leaving his mother in her house at Huntingdon, came to live at Slepe Hall, St Ives, where he farmed until 1636, when he removed to Ely. In a letter he wrote to Mr Storie, dated St Ives, 11 Jan. 1635, he writes: "they that build up spiritual temples, they are the men truly charitable, truly pious. Such a work as this was your erecting the lecture in our country in the which you placed Dr Wells, a man of goodness and industry and ability to do good every way; not short of any I know in England, and I am persuaded that sithence his coming the Lord has by him wrought much good among us."

In Dr Williams' library there is a MS. informing us

there was in 1715 a congregation of Presbyterians in St Ives with 500 members. And in Calamy's History of his own times, in 1713, it is said that the minister of this congregation was Michael Harrison, who had been a minister of the Established Church, but had seceded to the Presbyterians. The year 1642 is assigned, in the Congregational Year Book, as that of the foundation of this church. Report is doubtless correct in asserting that it had its origin in the ejectment of the Rev. Job Tookie from the Vicarage.

CHAPTER IV.

Dr Robert Wilde.

Dr Robert Wilde was born at St Ives in 1609. He was destined for the church, and was chosen Minister of Aynho, in Northamptonshire, after the ejectment of a "scandalous" minister by the Parliamentary Commissioners. He was a candidate for this place with another minister, and when asked by a friend whether he or his competitor had got Aynho, Wilde answered, "We have divided it. I have got the AY, and he has got the NO." At Aynho he remained until his ejectment, 24 Aug. 1662. He was celebrated for his wit and his poetry; the above is a specimen of the former, and a specimen of the latter we will give. Dr Calamy tells us that Richard Baxter was much displeased with Dr Wilde's facetiousness, and thought it injurious to his usefulness as a minister. Baxter, on his way from Kidderminster to London, called upon him at Aynho to reprove him "as the times were very dark." When he came there he found the Doctor had gone to church, it being observed by him and his people as a fast day. Baxter got into a corner of the church, and when the sermon was over came to the Doctor, thanked him warmly for his sermon, and desired that he would reprove and rebuke him sharply, as he deserved it. Baxter added, "For my great uncharitable-

ness and folly in believing reports," and he then explained why he had called upon him. A minister who knew Wilde personally writes thus of him: "He was excellently qualified unto his ministerial work; none more melted or melting in prayer, nor more serious and fervent in preaching Christ and his gospel." Calamy adds that "those who knew him, commended him, not only for his seriousness, but also for his strict temperance and sobriety. He was very serious in serious things." On his ejectment he retired to Oundle, where he died in 1679, aged 70 years. A little before his death he preached on Rev. xivth and 12th verse, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," when he said, "It is but a short time and I shall soon be in Paradise." As Dr Wilde was different to the usually conceived type of a Puritan, it will be interesting to know more of his character. Wood says that "he was a fat, jolly, and boon Presbyterian," and elsewhere speaks of "the humour of Dr Robert Wilde, the poet." Dr Wilde's poems were originally published in sheets, and in 1670 they were collected and published in one volume. They enjoyed an immense popularity. Dryden says that "Wilde was the Wither of the City, and that the citizens bought more editions of his works than would lie under all the pies at the Lord Mayor's Christmas." When his famous poem first came out in 1660, Dryden says "I have seen them reading it in the midst of 'Change time; nay, so vehemently were they at it, that they lost their bargains by the candles' ends." Dryden adds, "it was equally well received amongst great people." One of his poems describes the character of a leader amongst the nonconformists,—one of the ejected ministers, and shows Dr Wilde's appreciation of him, and his principles; we give it here. It is entitled—

"A poem upon the Imprisonment of Mr Calamy in Newgate."

"This page I send you, sir, your Newgate fate
Not to condole but to congratulate.
I envy not our mitred men their places,
Their rich preferments, nor their richer faces:
To see them steeple upon steeple set,
As if they meant that way to heaven get.
I can behold them take into their gills
A dose of churches as men swallow pills,
And never grieve at it: let them swim in wine
While others drown in tears, I'll not repine.
But my heart truly grudges, I confess,
That you thus loaded are with happiness;
For so it is: and you more blessed are
In Peter's chain, than if you sat in his chair.
One sermon hath preferred you, so much honour
A man could scarce have had from Bishop Bonner;
Whilst we, your brethren, poor erratics be,
You are a glorious fixed star we see.
Hundreds of us turn out of house and home,
To a safe habitation you are come.
What though it be a gaol? Shame and disgrace
Rise only from the crime, not from the place.
Who thinks reproach or injury is done
By an eclipse to the unspotted sun?
He only by that black upon his brow
Allures spectators more; and so do you.
Let me find honey, though upon a rod,
And prize the prison, where my Keeper's God:
Newgate, or hell, were heaven, if Christ were there—
He made the stable so, and sepulchre.
Indeed the place did for your presence call:
Prisons do want perfuming most of all.
Thanks to the Bishop and his good Lord Mayor,
Who turned the den of thieves into the house of prayer;
And may some thief by you converted be,
Like him who suffered in Christ's company.
Now would I had sight of your mittimus;
Fain would I know why you are dealt with thus.

Gaoler, set forth your prisoner at the bar.
Sir, you shall hear what your offences are.
First, It is proved that you, being dead in law,
As if you cared not for that death a straw,
Did walk and haunt your church as if you'd scare
Away the reader and his Common Prayer.
Nay, 'twill be proved you did not only walk,
But like a Puritan, your ghost did talk.
Dead, and yet preach! those Presbyterian slaves
Will not give over preaching in their graves.
Item, You played the thief, and if't be so,
Good reason, sir, to Newgate you should go:
And now you're there, some dare to swear you are
The greatest pickpocket that e'er came there.
Your Wife, too, little better than yourself you make—
She's the receiver of each purse you take.
But your great theft, you act it in your church—
I do not mean you did your sermon lurch,
That's crime canonical—but you did pray
And preach, so that you stole men's hearts away,
So that good man to whom your place doth fall
Will find they have no heart for him at all.
This felony deserved imprisonment.
What! can't you Nonconformists be content
Sermons to make, except you preach them too?
They, that your places have, this work can do.
Thirdly, 'Tis proved, when you pray most devout
For all good men, you leave the bishops out:
This makes Seer Sheldon by his powerful spell
Conjure and lay you safe in Newgate hell:
Would I were there too, I should like it well.
I would you durst swap punishments with me;
Pain makes me fitter for the company
Of roaring boys; and you may lie in bed,
Now your name's up; pray do it in my stead.
And if it be denied us to change places,
Let us for sympathy compare our cases;
For if in suffering we both agree,
Sir, I may challenge you to pity me:
I am the older gaol bird; my hard fate
Hath kept me twenty years in Cripplegate;
Old Bishop Gout, that lordly proud disease,

Took my fat body for his diocese,
Where he keeps court, there visits every limb,
And makes them, Levite-like, conform to him.
Severely he doth article each joint,
And makes inquiry into every point;
A bitter enemy to preaching, he
Hath half a year sometimes suspended me;
And if he find me painful in my station,
Down I am sure to go next Visitation;
He binds up, looseth; sets up and pulls down;
Pretends he draws all humours from the crown.
But I am sure he maketh such ado,
His humours trouble head and members too:
He hath me now in hand, and ere he goes,
I fear for heretics he'll burn my toes.
Oh, I would give all I am worth, a fee,
That from his jurisdiction I were free!

Now, sir, you find our sufferings do agree,
One bishop clapt up you, another me:
But Oh! the difference too is very great—
You are allowed to walk, to drink, to eat;
I want them all, and ne'er a penny get;
And though you be debarred your liberty,
Yet all your visitors I hope are free.
Good men, good women, and good angels come,
And make your prison better than your home.
And may it be so till your foes repent
They gave you such a rich imprisonment.

Dr Wilde did not differ so much from the leaders of the Puritans as many suppose. Milton, Colonel Hutchinson, Selden, and Owen—fairly representative Puritans—were all distinguished by their graceful dress and their polished manners. Bastwick finds fault with the Independents: "you shall find them with cuffs, and those great ones, at their very heels, and with more silver and gold upon their clothes and at their heels (for these upstarts must now have silver spurs) than many great and honourable personages have in their purses." Anthony Wood charges

Owen at the University, "with scorning all formality—a young scholar, with powdered hair, snake-bone band-strings with very large tassels, and Spanish leather boots, with large lawn tops and his hat mostly cocked, instead of being a good example to the University." Cromwell himself, when Whitelock told him, on his return from Sweden, how he had amused the members of his Embassy with music and dancing in the long winter nights, expressed his emphatic approval "of such very good diversions." One of the most popular preachers of the Commonwealth was Henry Smith, whose sermons, like Latimer's, abound in broad English humour. Milton, who appears to have thought that his works would only be read by the Puritan section of his countrymen, wrote for them "L'Allegro" and "Comus". See also Mrs Hutchinson's portrait of her husband.

We have already mentioned two ejected ministers who were born in the puritan town of St Ives. There is yet a third who was born there—Mr Robert Perrot; as his useful life was spent partly as minister at Dean in the adjoining county of Bedfordshire, and after his ejectment from that living, in Aug. 1662, in his native county of Huntingdonshire, a short sketch of him here will not be out of place. He was a serious, lively, useful preacher, took great pains in visiting his flock (so Calamy tells us), and was remarkable for starting and prudently managing spiritual discourse in common conversation. Indeed his whole carriage was exemplary. He practised physic, and after his ejectment attempted to settle as a physician, first at Kettering, and then at Nottingham; but the breaking out of the plague, by the coming of some Londoners in 1666, prevented the one, and many inconveniences the other. About this time he had an oppor-

tunity of preaching in Huntingdonshire for Mr Rede, in a public church near Buckden. Though this was under Bishop Laney's eye, he met with no molestation. Here he continued three years, and left on the death of Mr Rede. He went to Maidstone in Kent, where besides practising physic, he preached twice on the Lord's-day, and held a lecture besides. Here he died, aged 87 years. In his last sickness he was very composed and resigned; neither fond of life nor afraid of death.

CHAPTER V.

Mr Henry Denne.

We now pass from St Ives and its puritan interest of the *first* half of the 17th century, to return to it later on, when we will mention a few indications of the non-conformist influence which it exercised in the *second* half of that century. In 1641 the inhabitants of Huntingdonshire petitioned Parliament, expressing their sympathy with the Lord Kimbolton, impeached by Charles of high treason, and beseeching them, 'to root out the Papists and their religion, to devote the Popish lords and bishops, and others, from the house of Peers, and exenterate these evil counsellors from that illustrious assembly.' In Edwards's "Gangræna" published in 1646 we are told that the Isle of Ely abounded in Sectaries. About this time the neighbourhood of Bluntisham was much stirred by the energetic gospel preaching of Mr Henry Denne, who was educated at Cambridge University and ordained in the year 1630. He afterwards embraced Puritan views and exercised great influence. He joined the Arminian Baptists, and became a member of the church meeting in Bell Alley, Coleman Street, London. This Church sent him forth into Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, to propagate Christian truth. His labours were effectual; many churches sprang into existence, amongst them those of Fenstanton

and Warboys. Before becoming a Baptist he was curate at Pyrton in Hertfordshire, fulfilling for ten years the duties of a parochial minister. In December, 1641, he preached at Baldock a visitation sermon which gave rise to much excitement, and ultimately to his separation from the Anglican Church. In this sermon, preached before the Clergy, he embodied those great truths of God's word, which for ten years he had delivered to his own parishioners. But they were unpleasing to many of his clerical auditory, scarcely less so than the fidelity with which he reproved their vices. "Thus do you," he boldly says, "in some cases dissolve in the tavern, that which you confirmed in the pulpit, making a mock at all the ordinances of God, and seducing those by your conversation for whom Christ died." Mr Denne sought to revive the knowledge of the gospel, at the same time he denounced pluralities and the time-serving and licentiousness of the clergy. But while Presbyterians and Independents were free to preach anywhere—not so the Baptists. Towards the close of 1644, the Cambridge committee for providing ministers and removing "scandalous" ones, arrested and imprisoned Mr Denne. By the influence of Mr Desborough or Disbrowe, a brother-in-law of Cromwell, the matter was brought before parliament, and Mr Denne soon released. In the same year or early in 1645 he became minister of the parish of Eltisley in Cambridgeshire, though his residence was at Caxton, about a mile distant. James Disbrowe, lord of the manor of Eltisley and brother of Major-General Disbrowe (says Noble the Tory writer) whose name appears in the Fenstanton records as elder of the church, "has placed over the parish of Eltisley Mr Henry Denne whom he had, through the interest of the all-powerful Mr Cromwell, released from prison.....

Psalm singing was as heinous a sin here, as bending the knee to Baal, and it was then as much noted for the devout exercises practised there, as any other canting place in the kingdom." Mr Denne appears as the defender of the Quakers; and pleads in the same pamphlet, for a perfect toleration of papists, in respect of their religious belief; transubstantiation, purgatory etc. cannot he argues affect their relations with the state, but if they refuse to abjure such doctrines as "faith is not to be kept with heretics," or the like, then let them be dealt with as men not fit to live in a commonwealth; let them be banished, thus anticipating Locke's judgment in this matter. Mr Denne also defends the celebrated "Tinker" of Bedford against the "frivolous" charges of the Cambridge Reader in Rhetoric. As for Bunyan, says Mr Denne, "you seem to be angry with the Tinker, because he strives to mend souls as well as kettles and pans. The main drift of your letter is to prove that none may preach except they be sent." In Denne's judgment it was enough that the church at Bedford had called the "Tinker" to preach the gospel. He needed no better commission than that. Mr Denne died, it appears, about the year 1661. This epitaph, said to have been written by a clergyman, a friend of his, only remains:

> "To tell his wisdom, learning, goodness unto men,
> I need say no more; but here lies Henry Denne."

We can add a few more facts concerning Mr Henry Denne. Edwards in his "Gangræna" states that Denne employed himself during the year 1646 in "going up and down the country, spreading his corrupt opinions and dipping." In June he was arrested at Spalding in Lincolnshire, and brought before two justices of the peace,

charged with baptizing in the river four persons. We are not informed of the result of his arrest, except that he was confined "to the provost marshal for that day, being the Lord's day, that he should not make a meeting nor stir in the town that day by people resorting to him." Mr Denne appears, like many men of his profession, to have entered the army, and to have taken part in the war which overthrew the king, having got into trouble for disputing the right of Parliament to order the troops to Ireland, owing to the engagement the troops had made on Triplow Heath. The next intelligence we have of Denne is from a newspaper of the time :—"Saturday, May 19, 1649. This day also came intelligence of the surprisal of the revolted troops about Burford in Oxfordshire; they, being twelve troops, were all taken; very few escaped, some of the chief of which were immediately condemned to suffer death, viz. Cornet Tompson and Cornet Denn, or, as we call him, Parson Denn; and two corporals, Church and Perkins; these being found guilty upon the articles of mutiny are therefore adjudged to die. Cornet Denn, being a man of parts, and one who had been esteemed for piety and honesty, received his sentence with great manliness and fortitude of spirit, and yet with so much relenting and acknowledgement of the just hand of God, the justice of the sentence, and his submission thereunto, that he seemed to rejoice with willingness to suffer under so righteous a sentence, and he professed openly, that although his heart could not accuse him of an evil meaning, yet was he convinced of the evil of the action, and dangerous consequences of it."... The four condemned persons were, one after the other, brought to the place of execution, in the sight of the rest of the soldiers. Cornet Tompson and the two

Corporals suffered the penalty of the law. Cornet Denne being called out, came with much composure of spirit, expecting to die, but the general having commanded the Lieutenant-General Cromwell to let him know at the place of execution that his excellency had extended mercy to him, he soberly and suddenly replied: "I am not worthy of such a mercy; 'I am more ashamed to live than afraid to die'—weeping bitterly."—In justice to Mr Denne we must give an extract from his explanation. He says: "We did believe that there stood between us and Ireland (referring to the order to march into Ireland) an engagement made by the army at that famous rendezvous at Triploe Heath," when the army engaged to disband, on certain conditions—one of which was that a council should be formed of officers, and two soldiers from each regiment. Denne, with others, urged upon his Excellency this condition, "before we could submit to his Excellency's order." Denne makes manifest to his fellow-soldiers, in his declaration to them, that he regrets his late rash attempt, and adds: "Oh! how necessary it is at all times to draw near unto God for wisdom and understanding to guide and direct us in all our ways." In the month of October, 1653, Denne laid before the Fenstanton church a proposal to traverse the neighbouring districts in order to preach the gospel, reminding them of our Lord's command to communicate to all the riches of His grace. The church elected him as one of their evangelists, and sent him forth to the work. During the year 1654 Mr Denne extended his evangelistic labours to the county of Kent, revisiting the scenes of his ministry ten years' before. It led to an earnest request on the part of the church at Canterbury, that Mr Denne should be permitted to settle in that city.

Early in 1655 he proceeded thither, with the cordial concurrence of the church at Fenstanton, being supplied by them with money, horses, and all necessary conveniences for the journey. On his arrival at Canterbury, early in February, he found a hearty welcome, and a house prepared for his reception. Shortly after the Restoration of Charles II., the insurrection of Venner gave rise to the apprehension and imprisonment of many Baptists, and others supposed to sympathise with the principles of the Fifth Monarchy men.

On the very day of the royal proclamation, forbidding the assembling for worship of "anabaptists, quakers, and other sectaries," the London baptists presented to the King "An humble Apology," protesting against their supposed participation in Venner's rebellion.

The royal ear was closed. This apology and others were in vain. The meeting-houses were invaded by a rude and savage soldiery, and the prisons were soon filled with the victims of intolerance. In common with the Quakers, a few baptists deemed it sinful to take an oath, and their release from imprisonment was rendered still more hopeless by the Bill brought into the House of Commons in May 1661, for the suppression of baptists and quakers, having especial reference to their refusal to swear. Mr Denne came forward, and addressed his brethren in prison, endeavouring to show them that to take an oath is a lawful act, sanctioned by the word of God.

From the time of its formation till the year 1676 or 1677, the church at Fenstanton enjoyed the services of Mr John Denne as elder. He was the eldest son of Mr Henry Denne and resided at Caxton. The first volume of the Fenstanton records is all in his neat, good, writing

and consists of 384 quarto pages. Mr John Denne afterwards resided at St. Ives, and died in the year 1676 or 1679. In the expressive language of the records—he "died in the faith." A family of six children were born to him between 1654 and 1672.

Mr Henry Denne had a second son Jonathan who with his wife Sarah were members of the Fenstanton Church; they had six children registered as born to them.

This strong Missionary Church of Fenstanton lived on, past the middle of the present century, and in conjunction with that of Warboys, must have been an active religious influence, bearing upon Bluntisham in the 17th and 18th centuries. Indeed we are expressly told that at a meeting held at Fenstanton on the fifth day of the fourth month 1653, Edmund Mayle declared their proceedings at Over, and also at *Bluntisham* and Somersham.

In the records of the Warboys church we are told "by the preaching of Henry Denne, many in this county received the faith, of whom some were of this town." The baptists disputed with Eusebius Hunt, "parish teacher of Warboys," concerning the baptism of infants, on which occasion it appears Henry Denne preached in "the stone house" or parish church. After a second dispute, Denne demanded of Hunt whether he judged it best to sprinkle infants or let them alone? Hunt answered, "let them alone." This occurred in the year 1644. In the Fenstanton church register the names and residences are given of members from 1645 to 1692. They appear to have been drawn from as many as thirty-eight parishes, a few of which we give: St Ives, Holywell, Haddenham, Eason, the Hemingfords, Papworth, Yelling, Gamlingay, Cone (no doubt Colne), Sutton, Over, Hoton (no doubt Houghton). Visitors, we are told, "did go to Somersham, Yelling,

Holywell, Over, Earith, Colne, and several times to Bluntisham, to see different church members residing at these places." "In the time of the Commonwealth Henry Denne was refused the use of the parish church at St Ives by the Minister's committee. He went outside the town and preached under a tree, telling the people that Christ had died for Judas as well as for Peter, after which Henry Denne shook the dust off his feet against St Ives and departed."

CHAPTER VI.

Masters Francis Holcroft and Joseph Oddy.

There were two men whose lives, devoted to Christian teaching, exercised a notable and widely extended influence in Cambridgeshire and the surrounding counties. These were Mr Francis Holcroft and Mr Joseph Oddy. Both were Masters of Arts of the Cambridge University, the one a Fellow of Clare Hall, and the other of Trinity College. Both were presented to livings in Cambridgeshire, Mr Holcroft to Bassingbourne, Mr Oddy to Meldreth, and both were ejected from their Fellowships and Livings by the Act of Uniformity in August, 1662. Closely associated in their Evangelistic work after their ejection, sometimes they shared the same prison, at other times were confined in different prisons at the same time and for the same reason. Both upon their release prosecuted their plans with renewed vigour, preaching at Cambridge in spite of a drum which the Gownsmen beat in their meeting, preaching too all over the country, followed by such multitudes that they were often forced to preach abroad. Five years only divided them in their deaths, and they lie buried side by side in the little burial ground at Oakington purchased by Mr Holcroft and bequeathed by him, together with a small estate for the poor of his Church, for a burial ground. Over them a tomb is

erected, which may still be identified by travellers passing on the high road.

These two men exercised an influence in the district, of which Cambridge is the centre, akin to that of the two Wesleys in their larger field of action. Calamy says, "These two men were the founders of almost all the nonconformist churches about Cambridgeshire—the church at St Andrew's Street, Cambridge, being one of them—and exercised a general superintendency over them, assisted by three other elders." Their earnest labours for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ, and for the highest interests of their neighbours, kindled a corresponding earnestness in hearts, responsive to the heavenly call, making their hidden life in Christ manifest, quickening it into new life—a life doubtless in many instances transmitted from parents to children, and from friend to friend. Along with, and also apart from it, would pass traditions of acts—the outcome of the renewed life—all of which must have prepared the neighbourhood of Bluntisham to respond to the efforts afterwards put forth by Mr Coxe Feary and his friends, when they founded their church, the centenary of whose meeting-house this narrative commemorates. A few particulars of the lives of Masters Holcroft and Oddy will interest those who value their work. Mr Francis Holcroft was son of a knight who lived at Westham near London, he was a pupil of Mr David Clarkson, and Chamber-fellow with Dr Tillotson, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. He embraced puritan principles, and became, when at Cambridge University, a communicant with Mr Jephcot, of Swaffham-prior, eleven miles from Cambridge, who was ejected in 1662. His chamber being over the college-gate, he often observed a horse waiting before it a long time on Lord's-day morn-

ings for one of the Fellows, to go to preach at Litlington, a village thirteen miles distant, and often returning without the preacher, who was much given to intemperance and debauchery. Touched with compassion for the souls of the neglected country people, and ashamed of continuing idle in the college, when preaching was so much wanted, he offered to supply that parish. The offer was accepted, and his ministry was successful to the conversion and edification of many. About the year 1655 he accepted the living of Bassingbourn, where he laboured "in season and out of season," great multitudes following him. "Having become acquainted with many of the congregational judgment, he fell in with it, and became very zealous for it, so that he formed a church upon that plan, and was much against holding communion with the parish churches." Many of the members of his church living in distant villages, he and his assistant, Mr Oddy, administered the sacrament at one or other of these villages every Lord's-day. Mr Robinson writes that "After the ejectment Mr Holcroft considered himself as being still pastor of his flock; and as they could not all meet in one place, he determined to meet and administer the ordinances to them in separate bodies, at the different towns where they lived. But as this would have been too much for one man he assembled his people at Eversden to consider the matter, when they chose Messrs Joseph Oddy, S. Corbyn, J. Waite, and Beare, elders. These all laboured in the same work till the next year, 1663, when Mr Holcroft was imprisoned in Cambridge Castle for preaching at Eversden, Mr Oddy for preaching at Meldreth, Mr Corbyn and Mr Waite shared the same fate, and Mr Beare escaped only by flight. While the Pastors and Elders were thus separated from their flock, the people continued to meet together, and

passed their time in prayer and reading the scriptures. Sometimes some of the ejected ministers preached to them privately, and now and then the gaoler allowed Mr Holcroft to go out in the night and preach to them and administer the Lord's Supper. They had also letters from him, one of which was printed in 1688, entitled, 'A Word to the Saints from the Watch-Tower.' Mr Holcroft was considered the pastor of all the churches in the county, till soon after Mr Oddy's death, when these congregations became separate churches. This change was rendered necessary by Mr Holcroft's illness, first brought on by colds caught after excessive heat in preaching. This illness induced melancholy, and he continued to decline till on January the 6th, 1692, he died, at Triplow, either in his 59th or 63rd year. His courage and spirits returned before his death and he departed with great joy." Mr Milway of Bury says of his preaching, "It appeared to me truly apostolical, primitive and divine." Mr Robinson says, "...he seems to have been one of those uncommon men in whom the excellencies of several centred. His learning was enough to have gained him an ample reputation, but his knowledge of the gospel of Christ was astonishing. His preaching was less methodical than that of his contemporaries, but then it was more useful." Dr Calamy adds, "He was indefatigable in his labours, preaching perpetually about the country, so that there is scarcely a village in Cambridgeshire but some old person can shew you the barn where Holcroft preached. He had a lion-like courage, tempered with the most winning affability in his whole deportment. His doctrines were moderate Calvinism, and he had a great zeal for nonconformity, though a still greater for true piety, which he revered even in his enemies. During his long imprison-

ment in Cambridge Castle he was exceedingly cheerful, and though in the latter part of his life his spirits failed, yet all his conversation was heavenly and divine." Mr Oddy was born at Leeds, and passed from his school there to Cambridge University. At some period he retired to Willingham, where he in 1667 took up the work of Mr Bradshaw, who had formed a church there in his own house, and at this time left Willingham for London. Mr Oddy not only preached to this people but also all over the Fens. He was so much followed, persons travelling over twenty miles to hear him, that he was sometimes constrained to preach in the open fields, on which account it is less to be wondered at that he was frequently imprisoned. He was once confined five years together, but at length his preaching privately to his friends was connived at. Upon the Indulgence in 1672 he retired to Cottenham and gave himself up entirely to itinerancy till his death, May 3rd, 1687. Mr Oddy was quick at repartee and apt at rebuke. On one occasion, soon after his release from prison, he was accosted by one of the Cambridge wits with,

> "Good day, Mr Oddy,
> Pray how fares your body?
> Methinks you look damnably thin!"

to which Mr Oddy promptly replied,

> "That Sir's your mistake,
> 'Tis for righteousness' sake;
> Damnation's the fruit of your sin!"

We must add one other anecdote of him, "When preaching one night in a wood between Willingham and Cottenham, sitting upon his horse, that he might the more readily escape if molested by informers, he was broke in upon so abruptly, that he was thrown from his horse, and

quite stunned by the fall. In this state of insensibility, he was laid by his persecutors across the horse and in that position carried to Cambridge Castle."

In the recital by Mrs Churchman of her troubles of this time we are told—"Persecution now came on apace; the Dissenters could have no meetings but in woods and corners. I, myself, have seen our companies often alarmed with drums and soldiers. Every one was fined five pounds a month, for being in their company.....The *great* trial now came on; they found and seized my beloved pastor (F. Holcroft) and carried him to 'Cambridge Castle,' but even *there* God appeared wonderfully for him; he preached, and many souls were converted in that place." Mrs Churchman afterwards mentions attending a meeting at a place called "Toft." Mr Oddy (co-pastor with Mr Holcroft) preached. Among the State Papers is a Spy book showing the surveillance of the neighbourhood of Bedford and Cambridgeshire; it speaks of Meldreth, "where are concourses of many hundreds, both Independents and Baptists; that Francis Holcroft stops at the house of Widow Hawkes at Barlyn in Hertfordshire and holds meetings in the neighbourhood, three hundred at a time, and also meets with many hundreds at Cambridge."

CHAPTER VII.

The Act of Uniformity.

Let us now turn our attention to the direct and indirect religious influence exercised by the *nonconforming* ministers. They were those who would not conform to the new "Act of Uniformity," which obliged all ministers of the State Church to declare their unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in the book of Common Prayer etc. This they could not do, some for the excellent reason that it was not published until a few days before the 24th of August—the very day appointed for the ejection of such ministers as would not make the declaration.

We cannot enumerate the many reasonable objections made by the nonconforming ministers. That they were in earnest they shewed by leaving their parsonages and casting themselves abroad on the world a few weeks before the tithe was collected. It is grievous to think of the sad farewells spoken and made in church and congregation, Rectory and Vicarage. They were driven from their pleasant homes, exchanging these for want and homeless wanderings.

Amongst other things, the assent and consent, bound them to deny the Lord's Supper to all who would not take it *kneeling*. De Foe says "having occasion to go to

Windsor with a gentleman with whom I had had some contest about the position of receiving this sacrament, and the coercions then in fashion, it chanced we went into the Royal Chapel of St George's and reviewing the fine painting I was surprised that the government persecuted the Dissenters for not receiving the Lord's-supper kneeling, while in the altar piece the Saviour was represented administering the Last Supper to his disciples all *sitting* round the table—it was strange how a fair government could persecute its subjects for refusing to receive in a position which at the same time, they acknowledged thus publicly our Saviour himself did not practice at the first institution. My friend was astonished and struck dumb." Through the "Act of Uniformity" in the thousand parishes, the voice of the devout Teacher of truth and preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, was silenced, and his familiar form seen no more in the house of the sick, nor at the bedside of the dying, nor speaking words of comfort to the bereaved, pointing them to the blessed hope of reunion in their risen Lord. The deep mourning of the ejected, and of those from whom they were separated, rendered more bitter by the sense of the injustice of the Act, cast a heavy cloud over the land. Its present and future consequences were most disastrous.

Not only did the nonconformists suffer under the Act of Uniformity, but from an Act which received the Royal assent on the 31st October 1665—called the "*Oxford five mile act.*" It required all parsons and others in holy orders who had not subscribed the "*Act of Uniformity*" to swear that *under any circumstances* it was unlawful to take up arms against the king, and that they would not at any time endeavour *any alteration of government in church or state.* Those nonconformist ministers who would not

subscribe this oath, of *passive obedience*, were forbid under a penalty of forty pounds, except in passing the road, to come within five miles of any city, town corporate, or borough, that sends burgesses to Parliament, or within five miles of any parish, town, or place, wherein they had, since the passing of the act of oblivion, been parsons etc. or where they had preached in any conventicle. They were also rendered incapable of teaching any public or private schools, or of taking any boarders to be instructed, under the same penalty. In the year 1670 the *Conventicle Act* was re-enacted with two additional clauses "that if any justice of the peace refuse to do his duty in the execution of this act he shall forfeit five pounds; and that all the clauses of this act, shall be construed most largely and beneficially for the suppressing conventicles, and for the justification and encouragement of all persons to be employed in the execution of them." Although the Act says seditious conventicles, yet it is plain to any one acquainted with the history of those times and with the trials of those who were fined, that the real intention was to enforce conformity to the establishment. The agents chiefly employed were profligate mercenary informers who boasted to the conscientious sufferers that they were servants to the king and church, and that they would make them leave their conventicles and conform.

Some of the worst men in the community found lucrative employment as spies; their pay depending upon the diligence with which they hunted down the peaceable people who frequented the gatherings of the nonconformists. They had every inducement to be vigilant, for they received £7 or £8, sometimes even as much as £15, for a single successful conviction. The common people had many stories of the judgments that befel the informers.

After the Act of Uniformity came into force, Huntingdonshire benefited by the presence of several of the ejected ministers who resided within the county.

Mr Vintress was ejected from Church Brampton, Northamptonshire. He is said to have much resembled Mr Stephen Marshall,—one of the authors of "Smectymnuus," which title his initials commence—who was born at Godmanchester. It is probable that Mr Marshall would sometimes visit his native place—perhaps find shelter there during the persecutions,—his presence may have been the attraction which induced Mr Vintress to settle at Godmanchester on his ejectment from Church Brampton in 1662. He died at Godmanchester and is spoken of as a person of great worth, and above the common level of ministerial abilities.

Laney, Bishop of Lincoln, whose episcopal palace was at Buckden, allowed Mr Samuel Ainsworth, the ejected Rector of Kelmarsh and at this time continuing in his nonconformity, to preach publicly for some years together in the adjoining parish of Brampton. This good Bishop, we are told, also connived at the preaching of the Rev. Mr Rolt, the ejected minister of Tempsford, when for some time he preached publicly in a church near Buckden. We have already referred to a similar indulgence in the case of Mr Robert Perrot, ejected from Dean and a native of St Ives, Hunts. Nor was this good Bishop the only one who was friendly to the Nonconforming Ministers. Some years later, in the year 1681, Bishop Barlow dated a letter from Buckden, March 16th, written to the ejected minister of Long Whatton, Leicestershire. "My reverend brother, I have received yours, and this comes with my love and respects, to bring you thanks for the rational and pious book you so kindly sent me. Though my

businesses be many and my infirmities more, being now past 74, yet I have read all your book, and some parts of it more than once, with great satisfaction and benefit. For in your meditations of the love of God and the world you have instructed me in several things which I knew not before, or at least considered not so seriously and so often as I might and ought.....I shall pray for a blessing upon you and your studies: and your prayers are heartily desired by and for your affectionate friend and brother, Thomas Lincoln." "To my reverend friend, Mr Samuel Shaw, at his house in Ashby de la Zouch." What a pity that such a correspondence was not more frequent between these suffering nonconforming clergy and their conforming brethren in power.

Mr John Moore, the ejected minister of Clavering, Essex, after his ejection, preached at Easton, in Huntingdonshire, where he had an estate. He died in 1673, and is described "as a man of an humble spirit and of a blameless conversation." Philip Nye, M.A., of Magdalen Hall, Oxford, was born 1596. In 1633 he went to Holland to escape Laud's persecutions. He returned at the beginning of the long parliament, and by the Earl of Manchester's favour became minister of Kimbolton in Huntingdonshire. "He had a great concern in choosing the members of the Assembly of divines, in which he was one of the dissenting brethren. He was one of the chaplains who attended the commissioners to Charles I. in the Isle of Wight, 1647, and was made one of the Triers of ministers in 1652. He was also a principal person in managing the meeting of the congregational churches at the Savoy, by the Protector's orders; when the Declaration of the faith, order, and practice of the congregational churches in England was agreed upon by their Elders

and Messengers, October 12, 1658. After his ejectment he preached privately, as opportunity offered, to a congregation of Dissenters till the year 1672, when he died, aged 76. "He left behind him the character of a man of uncommon depth, who was seldom or never outstretched; but was of too warm a spirit." He had drawn up a complete history of the old Puritan Dissenters; but the MS. was unfortunately burnt at Alderman Clarkson's in the fire of London. But, besides the influence exercised by these good men after the ejectment under the Act of Uniformity, Aug. 24th, 1662, Huntingdonshire had the benefit of the previous years of puritan teaching in several parishes from which the ministers were afterwards ejected.

From Bottlebridge Mr Simon King was ejected. He had been schoolmaster at Bridgnorth, where Mr Baxter and he lived together in the same house; they were afterwards fellow-labourers in Coventry. After Mr King's ejectment in 1662 he lived at Long Orton, near Peterborough. He is described as "an able scholar, a man of solid judgment, of an honest heart, and unblamable life; inclined to no extremes."

From the valuable parsonage of Elton, Mr Cooper was ejected in 1662. "He was a grave, venerable person of the Puritan stamp; and a man of great note in this country, for the purity of his life, the prudence of his conduct, and his ministerial abilities.

From Hemingford Mr Heath was ejected.

From Overton Longville Mr Edward Spinks was ejected, who at the Restoration had been previously ejected from Castor in Northamptonshire, a living worth £300 a year, in the gift of the Bishop of Peterborough. "Mr Spinks was an able preacher and a man of great

note. After he was silenced he lived near Mrs Elmes, his Wife's Mother, who had a good estate, and made all nonconformist ministers welcome at her house;" presumably this was in the same county as Overton Longville.

From Cherry Orton Mr Gibson, M.A., was ejected, "a good scholar, and an eminent preacher."

Mr Scott was also one of the ejected of this county.

From Standground, Mr Richard Kidder was ejected; he afterwards conformed and became Bishop of Bath and Wells. "He is well known as the author of a valuable work entitled 'The Messiah'." His predecessor in the living of Standground was Ken, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury, where he composed his popular morning and evening hymns. He was afterwards translated to the bishopric of Bath and Wells, and was one of the seven non-juring Bishops who were sent to the Tower in King James II.'s reign, because they would not take the oath of supremacy.

From Over, Mr Robert Wilson, B.A., Jesus College, Cambridge, was ejected. "He was eminently pious and charitable, and an ardent beggar for the Nonconformists." Mr Bains, a Norfolk clergyman, says of Mr Wilson, "He was as good and pious a man as ever lived upon God's earth."

From Sutton, William Hunt, B.A., King's College, Cambridge, was ejected. He was very useful here till his ejectment: when, being possessed of about £120, he bought a house and a few cows; and by his diligence in teaching a school, and the industry of his wife, who kept a dairy, with the kind assistance of charitable Christians, he brought up five children well. He was a man of a very catholic spirit, and a great lover of all who feared

and loved God. He was intimate with several persons of the established church, and among the rest, with the learned Dr Lightfoot, who expressed a high idea of his learning, and shewed him great kindness. When he had not liberty to preach, he went with his family to the public church, and instead of striving for the uppermost place, he chose the lowest, though the chief pew belonged to his near relations. He was a man of eminent piety, good ministerial abilities and great fidelity. He had a more than common knowledge of Latin and Greek, and was a good poet in each of these languages. He was unwearied in visiting the sick; ready to rise at midnight to go and pray with the poorest person in the parish. He was strictly faithful to his word, and would never promise but when he knew he could perform. He was much given to hospitality, and exceedingly charitable, seeming to take more pleasure in giving than in receiving. His house was common to poor travellers—such as were clean and decent he took into his family, and lodged in his beds; and such as were not, he lodged in his barn; and he would often converse with them there, and carry them food, and in cold weather take them to his fire. He died when about seventy years of age.

From Bluntisham Mr James Bedford, B.D. was ejected. He was the son of Mr Isaac Bedford, the excellent Minister of Clifton in Bedfordshire, and there he was born. He was much applauded for his ability and faithfulness in the work of the Ministry. Mr Bedford of Willion in Hertfordshire was his brother.

The religious influence of these good men in this county must have been considerable. Bluntisham and its neighbourhood doubtless shared in the benefits it conferred; and one would expect that the effects of this

influence, especially that arising from the ministry of the good man in Bluntisham Rectory, must be felt through the several generations down to the time of Mr Coxe Feary.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Royal Indulgence of 1672.

From the adjoining county of Bedfordshire, the influence of John Bunyan was felt in Huntingdonshire, and must have reached the neighbourhood of Bluntisham. After his imprisonment for twelve years in Bedford gaol, on regaining his liberty in 1672 on the proclamation of Charles II.'s Act of Indulgence, he preached for sixteen years in the Meeting-house at Bedford and the country around, giving light and energy to evangelistic truth. At this time Bunyan and his friends purchased a barn and orchard at Bedford—the site of the present "Bunyan Meeting-house"—and one of the names in which it was conveyed was that of "Thomas Crocker" of Kimbolton, Huntingdonshire. Under the Act of Indulgence by Charles, allowing the licensing of Meeting-houses and Conventicles, Bunyan applied for a licence to preach in this barn at Bedford and at sundry other places, amongst them two in Huntingdonshire, (viz.) Upthorne and Kimbolton. Bunyan was the first (or nearly the first) Nonconformist minister who obtained a licence to preach in England under this Indulgence.

"The Congregationalist" gives an interesting account of the reception this Act of Charles met with in the realm. "Amongst the persecuted Nonconformists the

news of the Royal Indulgence was welcomed with delight. The good news spread rapidly through the kingdom. King's messengers were dispatched with copies to the Lord-Lieutenants of counties and to the Mayors of the principal cities; but they were outstripped by unofficial messengers of various kinds. Scotch pedlars, mounted on swift Galloway nags, carried the indulgence into the country in their packs amidst their lace and linen. Carriers in charge of country waggons spread the intelligence in every little village through which they passed. Guards of fast coaches caused the declaration to be read aloud by the landlords of inns at which they stopped to bait or change their horses. Itinerant preachers carried the declaration in their bibles, and read it in the congregations to which they preached. And whether the news was told in barn or kitchen, in cellar, or wainscoted chamber, everywhere it awakened a thrill of gladness. The fact of the indulgence added point to many a sermon, inspired the devotion of many a prayer, and gave volume to the singing of many a psalm. The tinstreamers, as they laboured amongst the gorse on the hill-sides of Cornwall, spoke to each other joyfully of the great concessions made by the King. The weavers of Lancashire as they bent over their looms, stopped the shuttle to sing with gladness, no longer afraid of the spy lurking at the door. The armourers of Warwickshire, the blacksmiths of Northumberland, the coal-miners of Wales, partook of the general joy. Artisans in towns, and fishermen on the coasts, manifested a similar amount of enthusiasm; while the stout hinds as they drove their awkward ploughs through the rich soil, chanted psalms with glad hearts because of the King's indulgence. An office was opened at Whitehall, for the purpose of re-

ceiving applications and granting the necessary licences. There were three forms drawn up: for a meeting-place, for an itinerant preacher, and for a preacher to an assigned place. The applications quickly began to pour in. There is reason to believe that the London dissenters organized a plan to facilitate the wishes of their brethren in the country. Several of the leading Ministers signed receipts for large numbers of licences, which they dispatched by carriers into the country. After they were dealt with, the original applications were carefully preserved and are still in existence. In their haste to obtain the offered privilege, applications were written upon the first scrap of paper that lay near. There are hundreds of pieces no bigger than the palm of a man's hand, containing the name and address of the writer; many of the papers bear signs of having been torn out of some book; others are large sheets, with as many as thirty addresses upon each. Within ten months about 3500 of these licences were granted.

Though the humble Christians met in the houses of friends, or in small rooms hired or built for the occasion, their progress was marvellous. But the Bishops were alarmed, and the King was advised to recall the indulgence. The licences were accordingly declared void by a Proclamation in 1674.

We will record here the fact which George Whitehead relates in his memoirs, "how one Thomas Ibbott, or Ibbitt, a Huntingdonshire man, came to London two days before the great fire, in great haste, being on a sixth day of the week, and alighted off his horse with his clothes loose, and very much hastened or run through the city, toward Whitehall, in such a like posture as many of the inhabitants were forced to flee from the fire, when

they had scarce time to put on or fasten their wearing clothes about them; such a sign he appeared to be, and foretold his vision which he had before, that the city would be laid waste by fire, according as I was informed; for I saw him not until that day's morning when the fire was broken out. But the evening after the said Thos. Ibbott had passed through the city, I met with some of our women Friends at the Bull and Mouth, near Aldersgate, who gave me a pretty full account of him, how he had been with them that day, and told them of his vision of the fire and message to London." George Whitehead informs us that Thomas Ibbott was convinced of the truth at a large meeting which George Whitehead held in Thomas Parnell's barn, at King's Ripton in Huntingdonshire, a considerable time before the fire. George Whitehead further says—"I knew the man, a sort of manly person, zealous, and somewhat of a hot spirit; so that his spirit is nearer to those destroying angels, or fiery spirits, that are ministers of wrath and severe judgments, than those friends are, who have attained to a further growth in the spirit of the Lamb, Christ Jesus. And that the said Thomas might sooner have a discovery of such an evil, or judgment, or mischief permitted to come upon the city, than they whose spirits are more meek, gentle, and more settled in quietness and peace."

CHAPTER IX.

Influence of St Ives, and of the Church at Rowell.

We now return to St Ives and its Nonconformist influence in the *last* half of the seventeenth century.

"Mr William Green, Master of Arts, Cambridge University, and Fellow of Katherine Hall, spent fourteen years in the University. After his ejectment in 1662, he preached in and about Cambridge in private. In the latter part of his time, he lived at Fenny-Stanton, near St Ives, in Huntingdonshire; about which place many were edified by his preaching and holy conversation. He was a learned, grave, and holy man."

Mr John Richardson, of Queens' College, Cambridge, at one time resided in St Ives, and kept a school there. He afterwards was ejected from St Michael. He was of a very heavenly mind. A loving and faithful friend to the friends and children of God, and humble in his carriage to them. He would take journeys to the meanest Christian friends and advise and pray with them. Being once to preach at Paul's Cross, and as was usual a glass of sack being offered him before he went into the pulpit, he refused it, and pleasantly said, "he did not choose to preach by the spirit of sack." Mr Nathaniel Bradshaw, B.D., of Trinity College, Cambridge, and one of the Senior

Fellows, lived at St Ives after his ejectment from Willingham, where God greatly blessed his ministrations. When ejected he left a very good living valued at £350 a year, and many good people, for the sake of his conscience, Aug. 24th, 1662. He was succeeded by a profane minister who scoffed at him for his way of preaching; Mr Bradshaw replied, 'Sir, I left fourscore and ten praying families in Willingham at my ejectment, and I am afraid your ministry will never make them up a hundred.' As soon as the act of Toleration came forth, he returned to his old people at Willingham, and preached among them till the last Sabbath of his life; desiring no more of them than his diet from Saturday night till Monday morning, and his horse hire from St Ives, where he lived with Mrs Mason, his wife's daughter. He was eminent in personal holiness. He died at St Ives on the 16th October, 1690, in the 71st year of his age. He was buried in the chancel of Willingham church, as was also his successor, Mr Naylor, the profane person above mentioned. When the Sexton was digging the grave for the latter near Mr Bradshaw's grave, a high churchman who was looking on exclaimed, 'Why do you bury him so near that fanatic?' To which an aged woman who was present, and who knew their different characters, shrewdly answered, 'It can't affect them while they lie here, and they may be far enough off at the Resurrection!'

Mr Robert Billio, son of the ejected minister of Wickham Bishops, Essex, came to live in St Ives, after his return from Holland, where he had taken refuge during the reign of James II. He returned just before the Revolution. He married the daughter of Mr Rider, who was ejected from the living of Bedworth in Warwickshire, in 1662. An instance of the narrow escapes made by

silenced ministers of this time occurs in the life of his father. After his ejectment from the Rectory of Wickham Bishops, he was preaching in the house of Israel Mayo, Esq., at Bayford, in Hertfordshire, when men came in search of him; happily he was got out of the way in time, and conveyed to a garret, where he was covered in a dark hole with billets, and remained undiscovered.

The presbyterian congregation at St Ives must have been an important one at this time, for quite early in the next century it consisted of 500 members. Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury, was favourable to the revolution and to the liberal minded Prince of Orange—the first English king anxious to give equal rights to Dissenters. Tenison was born at Cottenham, Cambridgeshire, educated at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He was made Rector of Holywell, in Huntingdonshire, Bishop of Lincoln in 1691, and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1694. Other religious influence was brought to bear upon Bluntisham by the wonderful energy of the Independent church at Rothwell (Rowell) in Northamptonshire. It is known that the Puritans held conventicles in their houses at Rowell as early as the year 1634, from state papers of the reign of Charles I. In the reign of William and Mary, there was a flourishing church there, of which Mr Davis was Pastor from 1690 to 1714. It appears from the church book at Rowell that during Mr Davis' pastorate there were ninety-seven persons admitted residing at seventeen different villages in Huntingdonshire, amongst them those of Holywell, Needingworth, and Woodhurst.

As the following anecdote illustrates both the man and the times we will insert it. Mr Davis was summoned to his trial at the Northampton assizes in the early part of 1692. Whereupon, as appears by the Rowell church

book, "Feb. 12th, 1692. Agreed that a day of fasting and prayer be kept on Monday next, to seek the face of God with respect to our honoured pastor, that is to appear before men for the sake of Christ,. and also with respect to Brother Rowlett which is also to appear before men." Mr Davis refers in his vindication, in relation to this trial, to the ill-affection towards him of the gentry of this and the adjoining counties. Mr Maurice was the Pastor of an independent church then existing at Oxney, he was afterwards assistant to Mr Davis, and at his death, Mr Maurice became the Pastor of the church at Rowell. Mr Maurice tells us in reference to this trial that when Mr Davis was "unjustly accused to authority by invidious wretches, who could not follow their charge, nor make any part of it good, and therefore he was publicly and honourably acquitted, that a certain gentleman in a virulent and impertinent manner asked him, 'What business he had to go up and down to such places babbling?' for so he called the preaching of the gospel. Mr Davis, in the presence of them all, turned to him, and with a countenance which testified a good cause and a good conscience, said, 'Sir, I was upon the work of my Lord and Master Jesus Christ—do you know him?' Whereupon the gentleman was struck with silence, and many more with amazement."

During Mr Davis' pastorate the Rowell church shewed amazing missionary energy. Amongst the numerous churches it founded was one in the fens of Cambridgeshire—Guyhirn. In the church book occur the following records respecting the "Guy Horn" community. "Feb. 1st, 1691, the church appointed messengers to enquire into a handful of late converts in the Fens, and to give the church an account." At the beginning of 1693, "the

distinct enchurching of the brethren and sisters at the Fens" begins to be mentioned. On July 16th of that year the church ordered a letter of dismission to be signed for the brethren in the Fens; and on the 23rd, a meeting was held at Guyhirn, in the record of which the following entry occurs: "Then our brethren and sisters were embodied into a church apart from us, by the consent, and in the presence, of the messengers deputed by us." The church at Guyhirn appears to have had at this time thirty-seven members. It existed with its own Pastor for one hundred and fifty years.

Amongst other churches founded by that of Rowell, were two in Huntingdonshire, one of them at Kimbolton, founded March 14th, 1693, consisting of ninety-five members; the other at Needingworth, two miles from Bluntisham, this church became independent Jan. 17th, 1693, and consisted of sixty-seven members. The church at Rowell deputed Brothers Coales and Richard Pain to preach at Needingworth 'as often as they could go'. It appears that up to this time these Christians at Needingworth belonged to the church at Rowell and were members of it, for on Dec. 12th, 1692, a letter of dismission for the members about Needingworth was signed by the Church at Rowell in order that they might separate into a distinct body. In the records of a church meeting held at Needingworth, Jan. 17th, 1693, the following entry occurs: "Then the messengers of this church proceeded to the work of the day to break them off into a distinct church." The memory of this first dissenting church at Needingworth seems to have completely died out there. Probably a place called "Chapel Close" derives its name from some relation to it. The present Baptist Church originated from the labours of Mr Thomas Ladson nearly

one hundred years after the foundation of the church there by Mr Davis.

There is another entry in the Rowell church book which interests us: "Feb. 1st, 1691, messengers from Mr Holcroft's church nigh Willingham, desired the prayers of the church." There are other records of civilities between the two churches in this old church book of Rowell.

CHAPTER X.

Persecution of Mr Abraham Gill and others.

In Wilson's *Life of De Foe* there is an interesting account given of Mr Abraham Gill, which, besides bearing upon our subject because he preached at Manea and Welney, in the neighbourhood of Bluntisham, is an instance of the dangers men ran from local persecution in those days. De Foe, always quick to defend against injustice, hoped by publicity to shame the persecutors of Gill and bring him peace and help.

"Abraham Gill was born about 1665, was educated amongst the Dissenters, but afterwards entered Brazennose College, Oxford, where he took his M.A. degree and orders in the Church of England. He was for two years Curate at Manea, where he preached *twice* on the Sunday, contrary to the usual custom of the neighbouring clergy. In 1695 he accepted an invitation from the inhabitants of Welney, a hamlet in the parish of Upwell, to officiate in a privileged chapel there, the custom of the place empowering the people to choose their own minister. Here he continued about seven years, preaching twice a day, conforming in all other respects to the usages of the Church of England. At length he became dissatisfied with the liturgy and dropped such parts as he disliked, until his scruples increasing, he omitted it altogether. As

the chapel was exempt from ecclesiastical jurisdiction he did not consider himself under the same obligation to conformity as if it had been a parish church. Dr Gregg, Rector of Upwell, went to remonstrate with him and threatened to put in another Curate, but Mr Gill satisfying him that he held the chapel by a title over which he had no authority, he desisted from giving him any further trouble. Some time after this the living fell into other hands, those of Hugh James, and he resolved to get rid of Gill." De Foe relates a long series of persecutions by which he at length effected his purpose. Having quitted Welney, Gill went into Lincolnshire, where his enemies pursued and imprisoned him, but the prosecution failing he was released without a trial. This barbarous usage, coupled with his known innocence, created such an interest for him in the people of Upwell, that many invited him to settle there as a dissenting minister; he consented and qualified himself according to law; a place of worship was licensed in the Archdeacon's court at Norwich. His enemies assailed him and obtained his commitment to Norwich gaol. There he remained till the assizes, but with all their different charges against him, he was acquitted. Mr Gill being restored to his people, the Rev. Hugh James and his curate Lateward, threatened to send him to prison again, if he presumed to preach in their parish. They soon did so, and he was in gaol at Wisbeach; there he was detained over the quarter session until the assizes, 26th April, 1704, when he looked for his discharge. To prevent his getting away, the two parsons conspired with some neighbouring justices to have him impressed for a soldier. It was in vain he pleaded his profession and that he was a freeholder of Lancashire, and a freeman of the corporation of Wigan. Being de-

livered over to the soldiers, he was marched forty miles to Cambridge, where he was arrested for debt and lodged in the Tolbooth. His enemies next raised a hue and cry after him as a deserter, and Fern, a clerical justice, issued a warrant for his apprehension. Gill now moved for a 'habeas corpus' to discharge him from enlistment, and for a rule of court against the conspirators, and after seven weeks of imprisonment returned to Welney, where his wife and family were reduced to great distress. Here fresh vexations were prepared for him, for his enemies eluded justice. They slandered him in every way, but, as De Foe says, "Gill dwells on the spot near them, and preaches to his people, but they neither prove nor punish, and yet the law is open."

An interesting reminiscence of these persecuting times is found in the memoirs of Mrs Hannah More, who was born in the year 1745. Her father was Mr Jacob More, who had two great-uncles, captains in Oliver Cromwell's army. His mother was a woman of extraordinary mental vigour, and lived to be over ninety years of age. She used to tell her younger relatives that they would have known how to value Gospel privileges had they lived, like her, in the days of proscription and persecution; when, at midnight, pious worshippers went with stealthy steps through the snow, to hear the words of inspiration delivered by a holy man at her father's house, while her father, with a drawn sword, guarded the entrance from violent or profane intrusion; adding that they boarded the minister and kept his horse for ten pounds per annum.

On Dec. 12th, 1682, John Richardson writes to Increase Mather: "It is a sorrowful time with Dissenters; their ministers are much persecuted with much violence on the account of forty pounds per month, and other

accounts. Mr Baxter's house is broken open, and his person and goods seized (he was afterwards released). Mr Mead's goods seized, but he escaped. Mr Cockrain, Mr Partridge, their goods seized, and Mr James imprisoned, and Mr Wise. Others sought after, fain to conceal themselves, and convey their very household stuff out of the way."

Mr Samuel Baker, of Waterfield, in Suffolk, writes Jan. 30th, 1682–3: "The meetings are suppressed in Norwich and Bristol. Mr Vincent, a London minister, lies a prisoner there three months. Many must leave the king's dominions, or suffer death."

London, April 27th, 1683. "The meetings of Dissenters are prevented much as may be. Constables and other watchmen attending at the doors of the wonted meeting-places generally keep them out, that they meet not, which is intended as a kindness, rather than to suffer them to meet and then apprehend and prosecute them, the king pressing it upon the Lord Mayor and authorities in the city impartially to execute the laws against them." Neal well describes these times in the following passage.

"The Nonconformists were once more made to pass through the furnace of persecution, made seven times hotter than it was wont to be. They held their meetings nevertheless, but more secretly, and assembled in small numbers. They frequently shifted their places of worship, and met together late in the evenings or early in the mornings. There were friends without doors always on the watch to give notice of approaching danger. Where their dwellings joined they made windows or holes in the walls, that the preacher's voice might be heard in two or three houses. They had sometimes private passages from

one house to another, and trap doors for the escape of the minister, who always went in disguise, except when he was discharging his office. In country towns and villages they were admitted through back yards and gardens into the house, to avoid the observations of neighbours and passengers. For the same reason they never sang psalms, and the minister was placed in such an interior part of the house, that his voice might not be heard in the streets. The doors were always locked, and a sentinel placed near them to give the alarm, that the preacher might escape by some private passage."

It is difficult to estimate the influences or to define the limits of spiritual forces. The persecutions in France succeeding the Revocation of the "Edict of Nantes" were known over all England, and stirred its protestant feeling to its depth. This knowledge must have come with a peculiar significance to the ears of Protestant Nonconformists whose religion was proscribed, whose pastors were imprisoned, and whose members were subject to local persecution. To be at the mercy of a king who was secretly a member of the most persecuting church in the world, and openly of an intolerant state church, was to be in a miserable position of insecurity; and when the tales of woe—stories of houses in ruins—of happy family life broken in upon and crushed—Protestant worship prohibited—its pastors slain—when these came to be household stories, told at all the fire-sides in England during the succeeding winter of 1684–5, the good folk of Bluntisham and its neighbourhood must have been deeply moved. When individuals or whole families of the persecuted fled to England for an asylum, some of them settled at Wisbech and a colony of them at French Drove. These events and the questions they stirred, must have quick-

ened the love of liberty in all, and the love of religious liberty in religious hearts. Many of these refugees settled in the Eastern counties, where their descendants bear the old French names, though often slightly changed. In the life of the Rev. William Burkitt, M.A., Minister at Dedham in Essex in 1692, we are told that "by his book of accounts his labour of love for the poor French exiles continued six years successively, viz. from 1687 to 1692; in which time, though he lived but in a country village, he so exerted himself, far and near, in this matter, that he collected no less than two hundred and sixteen pounds, which he faithfully distributed towards the relief of the said Protestants in Suffolk and Essex. Remarkable also were his care, pains, and prudent conduct in the distribution of this charity; for, as he gave some part of it in specie, as necessity required, so that he might lay out the rest in the most frugal manner for the furnishing them with clothes and provisions, he rode about the country to the cheapest markets." "All my charges for journies and letters, all my labour and pains, I account as nothing, but look upon it as the greatest honour of my life, that the Lord made me such an instrument for the relief of his persecuted members." In the Rowell records we find the name of de la Hoi mentioned; this family appears to have been living at or near Guyhirn, and was connected with the little community there in 1693, when it was formed into a separate church. At a church meeting held at Rowell, Sept. 7th, 1691, there is this minute, "There these gave in their experience, these six from the fens," amongst them is the name "Anne de Hoi." These were fellow members with many Huntingdonshire people living at Needingworth and other places, during their association with the church at Rowell. In looking over

the church book of Bluntisham Meeting the following names occur which savour of a French origin and may be reasonably conjectured to be the descendants of the French refugees of a century earlier: they are Daniel Behague, Elmour, Pappee, Piccard, Pickard and Parrin. The names of Behagg, Elmore, Piggot and Parren still exist in the neighbourhood. At St Ives the name of Bosquain was owned by a French refugee family of 1684, and Mr Coxe Feary's second wife was the widow of Mr John Bosquain.

That the state should try and bring about uniformity in religious belief was almost as absurd as for it to attempt to bring about unity in religious feeling—from the nature of things it must fail. The first is not desirable and the second impossible, in any way the state can comprehend. There is an ideal unity of religious feeling recognised by lofty minds and pure hearts in which the leaven of Christian principles has worked, and so inspired they feel such unity attainable. But first we have to learn what Dr Bushnell so well expresses. "Most of what we call division in the church of God, is only distribution. The distribution of the church like that of human society, is one of the great problems of divine wisdom, and the more we study it, observing how the personal tastes wants and capacities of men in all ages and climes are provided for, and how the parts are made to act as stimulants to each other, the less disposed shall we be to think that the work of distribution is done badly. It is not the same thing with Christian unity, either to be huddled into a small enclosure, or to show the world how small a plot of ground we can all stand on. Unity is a grace, broad as the universe, embracing in its ample bosom all right minds that live, and outreaching all the narrow contents of all words and dogmas."

People generally have no idea of the petty local persecutions and annoyances to which Nonconformists were subjected in the exercise of their religion after the restoration, lasting indeed far into the 18th century. The miserable bickerings too often prevailing between different sects were far overshadowed by the persecutions and annoyances which were inflicted by the state church, which could bite as well as bark.

The possession of power by any body of Christians or religious people is apt to beget in them a spirit of intolerance which overrides justice. The spiritual power of such a community we can neither limit nor control, but we can lay down as a fundamental rule, that no sect shall be endowed with temporal power, and that no person in the realm shall be in the eye of the law in either a better or worse position on account of his opinion with respect to religion. Well would it have been for the world and for England had Christians been content to try and carry on their Master's work on their Master's lines. They thought to be wiser than He, and used weapons to promote Christianity, that He could have used, but would not. And so far as they departed from His methods of propagating the truth they miserably failed, and the genius of the religion of Christ was marred.

Milton understood and advocated these principles, and what Milton was to the nation in the advocacy of the freedom of religion from the patronage and control of the State in the seventeenth century, that Locke was to the nation in the eighteenth century.

According to Locke the origin of state-churches was to be ascribed to the lowest passions of humanity; their characteristics were not the characteristics of true religion,

and their history had been one of cruelty and oppression. He traced the divisions of Christendom, and the persecution to which men had been subjected, to the assumption by the Clergy, supported by the Magistrates, of sacerdotal power, although the scriptures plainly shewed that there was nothing which a priest could do, which any other man could not also do. Locke connected with this the rise and growth of Episcopacy, and the ambition which such an office had excited.

CHAPTER XI.

The Society of Friends.

Of all the sects, except one, Congregationalists most fully grasped the principles of religious freedom. Vane, an "Independent" statesman, said, "The province of the magistrate is this world and man's body, not his conscience, nor the concerns of eternity." Colonel Hutchinson was an anabaptist; Cromwell, although ecclesiastically an Independent, yet never forced Independency on the nation. He was willing to tolerate Jews, a thing then almost unheard of in Christendom; and he allowed Usher to preach close to Whitehall. By Congregationalists we mean both Baptists and Independents. Agreeing in the matter of church government, both are independent in the proper meaning of the term, their point of difference being that of baptism only, although there has existed a more distinct difference among Baptists than among Independents on the Calvinistic and Arminian doctrines.

The one exception is the Society of Friends. This Society preserved purely the spiritual nature of religion, clearing it from any entanglement with outward forms and from all extraneous control. The Anglo-Saxon race owes, and people of all nations owe, a debt of gratitude to this Society for having set forth so clearly and so purely the fundamental quality of Christ's teaching

—nay its very essence, and the Society will for ever be held in veneration for this rare service rendered to mankind.

The Friends had a Meeting-house at Bluntisham, which they appear to have used in the latter part of the 17th, and early part of the 18th century. It stood on the left-hand side of the road leading to Woodhurst, and after the Friends left, it was used as the Poor-house, and was afterwards turned into cottages which still remain.

This Meeting-house they gave up in the last century, confining themselves to the one at Earith, which stands pleasantly in the quiet retirement of its own burial ground on the margin of the ancient road. From the caretaker's house on the present Earith high road, the long pathway bordered by shrubs and flowers leads up the slight incline of the pasture to the home-like Meeting-house, with windows ample for light and air, "yet provided with blinds that withal our meditations be not disturbed by over much even of God's best temporal gifts, but to preserve temperance in all things." This is the withdrawing room from the distractions of the world, that is all, and it is enough. All the necessities of Christian worship are met. In this dear old spot, so redolent of the past, precious memories mingle with the sweetness of the violets that purple the grass of this quiet resting-place of the dead. Here for generations have the gentle Friends—though withal sturdy in holding to their principles—gathered for worship, and here still do their descendants gather for the same purpose. One regretfully looks for the picturesque and distinctive garb that in the past completed the quaint picture of the "first day" worship. But although this is wanting, yet their living representatives still hold this truth "twice trea-

sured" in their ~~inmost~~ Shield of faith hearts, that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The presence of men holding such opinions as these must have been beneficial. The good they did must have very far outweighed any evil resulting from the narrowness and bigotry born of fanaticism, which occasionally marred their pure Christian doctrine.

These qualities brought them into conflict with other sects as well as with the Established Church. The irregular method they often adopted in their attempts to impart the divine light they believed they had from Heaven, furnishes some excuse for the roughness with which they were treated; it caused a dislike to them in persons whose reverence for order frequently smothered the important truth that order was supposed to preserve.

The plan of our narrative now leads us to recognise the religious influence which the Quakers brought to bear upon the people in and around Bluntisham.

The founder of the Society of "Friends," whose character stands out so prominently in "the noble army of martyrs," and to whom Huntingdonshire is indebted for much of its religious life and freedom, must have a place in our memorials.

George Fox says, "I was born in the year 1624 at Drayton in the Clay, in Leicestershire. My Father's name was Christopher Fox. He was by profession a Weaver, an honest man, and there was a seed of God in him. The neighbours called him righteous Christer. My Mother was an upright woman; her maiden name was Mary Lago, of the family of the Lago's, and of the stock of the martyrs.

"In my very young years I had a gravity and a stayd-

ness of mind and spirit not usual in children; insomuch that when I have seen old men carry themselves lightly and wontonly towards each other, a dislike thereof hath risen in my heart, and I have said within myself, 'If ever I come to be a man, surely I should not do so, nor be so wonton.' When I came to eleven years of age, I knew pureness and righteousness: for while I was a child I was taught how to walk so as to keep pure. The Lord taught me to be faithful in all things, and to act faithfully two ways, viz. inwardly to God, and outwardly to man; and to keep to yea and nay in all things."

"As I grew up my relatives thought to have made me a priest; but others persuaded to the contrary. Whereupon I was put to a man who was a shoe maker by trade, and dealt in wool. He also used grazing, and sold cattle; and a great deal went through my hands. While I was with him he was blest, but after I left him he broke and came to nothing. I never wronged man or woman in all that time; for the Lord's power was with me, and over me, to preserve me. While I was in that service, I used in my dealings the word 'verily' and it was a common saying among those that knew me, 'If George says *verily*, there is no altering him.' When boys and rude persons would laugh at me, I left them alone and went my way; but people had generally a love to me for my innocency and honesty."

After this he went through many painful experiences, discovering the want of true religion in many professing Christians, until he seemed in despair. One priest advised him to be bled, "but," Fox says, "they could not get one drop of blood from me, either in arms or head, though they endeavoured it, my body being, as it were, dried up with sorrows, grief and troubles, which were so

great upon me, that I could have wished I had never been born." But he persevered, seeking help, "seeking heavenly wisdom and getting knowledge from the Lord," and was brought off from outward things, to rely on the Lord alone. "Though my exercises and troubles were very great, yet I was sometimes brought into such an heavenly joy." "As I cannot declare the misery I was in, it was so great and heavy upon me, so neither can I set forth the mercies of God unto me in all my misery. O! the everlasting love of God to my soul, when I was in great distress! when my troubles and torments were great, then was his love exceeding great." "The Lord God opened to me by his invisible power, how, 'every man was enlightened by the divine light of Christ.' For I saw in that Light and Spirit which was before the scriptures were given forth, and which led the holy men of God to give them forth, that all must come to that Spirit, if they would know God or Christ, or the Scriptures aright, which they that gave them forth were led and taught by. When the Lord God and his Son Jesus Christ sent me forth into the world, to preach his everlasting gospel and kingdom, I was glad that I was commanded to turn people to that inward light, spirit and grace, by which all might know their salvation and their way to God; even that Divine Spirit which would lead them into all truth, and which I infallibly knew would never deceive any." His life of self-abnegation, of earnest Gospel teaching, of energy in diffusing the truth as he had received it is known to all. During his missionary travels he visited Huntingdonshire several times. His "Journal" informs us that he was at Huntingdon in 1656. "The Mayor of Huntingdon came to visit me, and was very loving, and his wife received the truth." He visited Huntingdonshire again in 1659. And

again in 1662: "Travelling into Huntingdonshire, I came to Thomas Parnel's, where the Mayor of Huntingdon came to see me and was very loving. From thence I went into the Fen-country, where we had large and quiet meetings." Again in 1666: "We went into Huntingdonshire, where we had very large and blessed meetings; and though we met with some opposition, the Lord's power came over all, and the monthly meetings were established there also." Again he visited the county in 1669, and apparently for the last time in 1678. He tells us in his "Journal," "I went to Huntingdon, in which county I staid several days, having many meetings, and much service amongst friends; labouring to convince gainsayers, and to confirm and strengthen friends in the way and work of the Lord. At Ives in Huntingdonshire George Whitehead came to see me, and travelled with me in the work of the Lord five or six days in that county, and some part of Northamptonshire." George Fox died in London on the 13th of 11th month, 1690.

Thomas Ellwood bears testimony to his character in these interesting words: "He was valiant for the truth, bold in asserting it, patient in suffering for it, unwearied in labouring in it, steady in his testimony to it, immovable as a rock. Deep he was in Divine Knowledge, clear in opening heavenly mysteries, plain and powerful in preaching, fervent in prayer. He was richly endued with heavenly wisdom, quick in discerning, sound in judgment, able and ready in giving, discreet in keeping counsel: a lover of righteousness, an encourager of virtue, justice, temperance, meekness, purity, chastity, modesty, humility, charity, and self-denial in all, both by word and example. Graceful he was in countenance, manly in personage, grave in gesture, courteous in conversation,

weighty in communication, instructive in discourse; free from affectation in speech or carriage. A severe reprover of hard and obstinate sinners; a mild and gentle admonisher of such as were tender, and sensible of their failings. Not apt to resent personal wrongs; easy to forgive injuries, but zealously earnest where the honour of God, the prosperity of truth, the peace of the church were concerned. Very tender, compassionate and pitiful he was to all that were under any sort of affliction; full of brotherly love, full of fatherly care; for indeed the care of the Churches of Christ was daily upon him, the prosperity and peace whereof he studiously sought. Beloved he was of God, beloved of God's people; and (which was not the least part of his honour) the common butt of all apostates' envy, whose good notwithstanding he earnestly sought.

"He lived to see the desire of his soul, the spreading of that blessed principle of divine light through many of the European nations, and not a few of the American islands and provinces, and the gathering many thousands into an establishment therein."

George Fox left an epistle to be opened and read after his decease; at the head of it he writes: "This for all the children of God everywhere, who are led by His spirit, and walk in His light, in which they have life unity and fellowship with the Father and the Son, and one with another."

This was the good man to whom Huntingdonshire, in common with so many other places, owed some of the deep religious feeling and Christian life found there in the seventeenth century and the years succeeding it.

One of the most prominent of George Fox's disciples was George Whitehead, himself a minister and leader of the Society.

This remarkable man was convinced of the doctrines preached by George Fox when George Whitehead was seventeen years of age, and for nearly seventy years he laboured by word and example in support of them. Born about the year 1636 in the reign of Charles I., he lived through the Commonwealth and the reigns of Charles II., James II., William and Mary, Anne, and into that of George I., and advocated very earnestly the cause of religious liberty before that king, and when introduced to the Prince of Wales, afterwards George II., he endeavoured to impress the mind of the Prince with this great principle. He died in the year 172$\frac{2}{3}$, at the age of eighty-seven years.

Besides the general influence which his occasional presence and the truths he taught brought to bear on Bluntisham and its neighbourhood, there is one episode in his life which has a particular bearing on the subject of our history, and directly affects our narrative. In its relation we must bear in mind that the hotness of the dispute and the apparent bitterness between the disputants was occasioned by the different views they held on the right of the state to interfere in the control and support of religion. James Bedford approved of a state church, and accepted the position of a minister of the established church; he was Rector of Bluntisham-cum-Earith, and was therefore owner of the tithes of that parish. When his parishioners refused payment he insisted, and did not shrink from employing the means the law furnished for enforcing his tithe payments, even to the imprisonment of recusants.

George Whitehead strongly disapproved of the whole system and principle of State Churchism. He considered that those who paid tithe supported a corrupt establish-

ment, which fostered an arrogant and worldly spirit, and forced upon the country a system of priest-craft and an idolatrous, debased religion. No one who knows George Whitehead can for a moment doubt the purity of his motives, or that in all his actions he was guided by the highest principles. His mind was full of divine light, and his heart was a shrine of Christian truth.

James Bedford, three years after the stirring episode which follows, rather than do violence to his conscience by signing the Act of Uniformity, gave up his Rectory home—his titles and the social status this position secured him. Knowing the high Christian character of both disputants, we shall not unduly weigh against them the uncouth roughnesses which appear in their dispute, and which pertain to the "pomp and circumstance" of their war, and seem almost inseparable from the disputes of that period. George Whitehead gives the following account of an occurrence in the year 1659.

"One James Bedford, Priest of Bluntsham cum Erith in Huntingdonshire, having made a great noise boasting and clamour against the people called Quakers, to render them ridiculous and odious, some of our Friends had some public disputes or discourses with him, in order to abate his clamour, yet notwithstanding he persisted in his reviling and ostentations against us, as if he could refute and run down the Quakers. At a dispute which our dear friend, John Whitehead, had with the said priest at the Steeple-house at Haddenham in the Isle of Ely, when I was present, (but did not much interpose, the appointment being between the priest and John) I observed the priest to be a meer empty confident boaster and reviler, and made but poor work on't. The dispute being over, the priest went to Justice Castle's in the

Town, and I went thither after him in order to have some discourse with him before the Justice, which I obtained, and discovered his ignorance, of which the Justice was made sensible in some measure; yet seemed a little to speak in the Priest's favour, but could not vindicate him. Nevertheless the Priest continuing a boasting clamorous adversary, and being a notorious persecutor of divers of our Friends for tithes; it was desired by some Friends, that I might have a public meeting with the said Priest, to dispute him; and also I understood that our dear friend and brother Geo. Fox Senior, was desirous that I should meet him. After serious consideration thereof, I found the Lord gave me freedom to meet the said boasting Priest publicly, whereupon I writ him a few lines importing my willingness or desire to meet him at his own parish church, so called, on a certain day."

Mr Bedford appears "by his note to have published in Ives market a day of his own appointment, pretending that he and Geo. Whitehead were to have a dispute that day in Bluntsham church." Although Geo. Whitehead had arranged to attend a meeting at Cottenham, he, believing the one at Bluntisham to be more important, decided to attend it. "I forthwith took my horse, and the said friend with me, and we hastened to Earith and Bluntsham about five miles, and quickly got thither, and I was in the Steeple-house about half an hour before the Priest came and sat down quietly in a pew. When he came in, with his books or tools, to make a noise against us, smiling, and bowing towards the people, I only looked up upon him, and sat down again quietly in the pew. The priest mounted the pulpit like some conqueror; yet not expecting antagonist, or combat, vauntingly called for George

Whitehead. I sat still awhile (being out of his sight) to hear how he would boast or insult. He called over and over, 'Where's George Whitehead?' At last Henry Foster forwardly answered, 'He's here'; thereupon I stood up and said, 'Here I am'; but the Priest would not own that I was the person, Geo. Whitehead, that was to meet him; I saw then he was surprised, and he would have shuffled me off or shifted the dispute; saying, 'You are not George White-head, tho' you have a white face.' Justice Castle being present, said, 'Yes, he is the man; Mr Bedford, look to yourself, etc.' I seeing the Priest so vain, and trifling in his talk, before he would enter into dispute, called out to him, 'Leave thy babbling, and let's come to matters, etc.' Then the Priest took out his watch, and laid it before him, and proposed for each of us to declare one quarter of an hour at a time, and not exceed, and he would begin first; and I should have the like time to answer."

Mr Bedford then began to read divers accusations, and perverse stories out of a book or books, against the people called Quakers, set out by some invidious adversaries, priests or others, and then (with contempt and derision) he descanted upon what he read against the said people.

Mr Bedford's accusations and Mr George Whitehead's refutations are then set forth, but would occupy too much room to give here.

One complaint Mr Bedford made was that a Quaker called him "a beast." George Whitehead then undertakes to prove from scripture that Mr Bedford is a beast, and further that "he demerited the character of an '*evil beast*'. "And when according to the preceding argument and instances, I made proof of my charge against the said

Priest Bedford, instead of making any reply or defence for himself, he quickly came down, slid away, quitted the place, and left the assembly; so that his former boasting and insulting was at an end, as I really believed the Lord would stop his mouth, for I felt the zeal of the Lord and his power with me at that time."

George Whitehead urges that James Bedford has shewed himself an unruly and vain talker, having taken up a great deal of time here, in vainly talking and prating to no purpose.

"That his teaching is for filthy lucre's sake, is manifest by his covetous practices and persecutions, for his filthy lucre against such as dissent from him: witness his and his men's taking away by force and violence, wheat, barley, and pease in great quantities, as much as he and his men pleased, for tithes from John Cranwell, besides four lambs and wool, what his men pleased in quantity, without account of value, and also three cows with calf, and a cart and wheels, in all amounting to £20 worth of goods for £12 demanded. And besides all this oppression and extortion, imprisoned John Cranwell in Huntingdon jail, to shew how legally he pretended to proceed, when he had so arbitrarily and illegally proceeded by force, to spoil and take away his honest neighbour's goods, to gratify his own avarice and revenge against him. It was thus apparent, this Priest taught for filthy lucre's sake, such things as he ought not; consequently, he was before his own hearers and others, proved *a beast* according to the sense of the Apostle Paul, and the scriptures of truth; and I may add that consequently he demerited the character of an *evil beast.*"

George Whitehead says: "I had a very good and quiet opportunity to declare and demonstrate the truth, and

preach the gospel to the people and all were peaceable and when I had thereby cleared my conscience to them, I gave them public notice of a meeting I intended, if the Lord pleased, to have the next day at the same town. So we all went peaceably out of their steeple-house; and the next day according to appointment, we had a very good and serviceable meeting, to which divers men of account came." He then travelled, and laboured in the work of the gospel in Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and the Isle of Ely.

In the year 1672 George Whitehead was moved to write a few lines to the king requesting liberty for the suffering Friends, entrusting them to the care of 'our honest and loving Friend, Thomas Moor,' who presently presented them, and a few days afterwards George Whitehead and Thomas Moor had an interview with king Charles, who granted them liberty to plead their cause before him and his council at Whitehall. They were successful, and the king granted pardon to the Quakers, and with the help and advice of George Whitehead, this pardon was extended to many imprisoned Baptists, Presbyterians, and Independents—amongst them John Bunyan, imprisoned in Bedford gaol. "This document swelled to that bigness, that we were hard put to it and troubled to find out a way or means to have it dispersed to all the prisons throughout England and Wales, where our Friends were confined. In two weeks' time we performed the journey and service for our suffering Friends in Huntingdon, having very providentially met with the under sheriff for Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire, who was a very fair and civil man, at Edmunds-Bury to whom I showed the king's patent and desired him to see them delivered out of prison in both

counties." It appears ten Quakers were in gaol in Huntingdonshire and one thousand four hundred and sixty in different prisons in England, and so by the determined and persevering efforts of this good man there was great joy in the prison-houses up and down the land, the poor captives were freed and now they could once more advocate the principles so dear to them, and the glorious gospel of the blessed God, more precious than liberty or life.

George Whitehead performed another great service in the cause of justice. He petitioned the king, James II., to put a stop to the infamous doings of the *informers*, whom he describes as a company of loose, irreligious, profligate wretches, who have been encouraged to plunder, rob, steal, break houses, commit burglary, tear away and make havoc and spoil of their neighbours' goods, to serve the CHURCH and KING! The sufferers were frequently convicted "in their absence, and often on false depositions sworn by concealed informers." The king granted an enquiry. On the day appointed, a great company of informers were collected at Clifford's Inn, who when they saw a large number of their victims coming forward to charge them with injustice and cruelty, before impartial commissioners, were ready "to *gnash* upon them with their teeth." The result was that "Their unjust trade and gain was discountenanced by the justices and quarter sessions and the discoveries made of their wickedness and injuries, forced some of them to fly; and others turned to beggary." The Friends, though they had been so severely impoverished by the proceedings of the informers, did not hesitate to supply the wants of these worthless creatures in their destitution. George Whitehead gives an instance of this kind in his own case. "After the trade of informing

was over, George Hilton, a notorious Informer, came to my house, complaining to me that he was to be a servant to a great person, but wanted clothes, or money to buy him some; whereupon I gave him something, being willing to render good against evil; he having been a very injurious adversary against myself, and many others of our Friends; however I was comforted that the case was so well altered, as that from taking away our goods by force, these poor wretches were fain to come and beg of us."

Yet still the Quakers suffered from the fines inflicted on them as recusants for non-attendance at their parish church, twenty pounds a month, and two-thirds of their estates. "The sottish, rude bailiffs, when they had seized the farmers' goods, remaining at their houses, eating and drinking until the goods were removed; sometimes the goods seized were for eleven months' absence from their parish church, amounting to two hundred and twenty pounds forfeiture! This iniquity also George Whitehead successfully opposed, and stayed by the king's leave processes against several hundred persons then under prosecution.

Risking too great divergence—we must follow the nearly octogenarian into the royal presence and listen to some of his simple, wise words. In 1714 George Whitehead congratulated the king, George I., on his accession, beginning his address, "Thou art welcome to us, King George, etc."

Intimating his desire to see the Prince of Wales, he was introduced and addressed the prince as follows. "We take it as a favour that we are thus admitted to see the Prince of Wales, and are truly very glad to see thee. Having delivered our address to the King thy royal father, and being desirous to give thyself a visit in true

love, we very heartily wish health and happiness to you both; and that if it should please God thou shouldst survive thy father and come to the throne, thou mayst enjoy tranquillity and peace, etc. I am persuaded, that if the King thy father and thyself do stand for toleration, for liberty of conscience to be kept inviolable, God will stand by you. May King Solomon's choice of wisdom be thy choice, with holy Job's integrity and compassion to the oppressed; and the state of the righteous ruler commended by King David, viz., 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springeth out of the earth by clear shining after rain.'"

It is said the good old man's address was well received by the prince.

Through the kindness of the Clerk to the meeting at Earith we are enabled to give extracts taken from the ancient book containing the records of the Society, and commenced two hundred and thirty years ago. Here is a simple record of their primitive form of worship.

"Anno 1655 James Parnell, the servant of the Lord, came to Colne in Huntingdonshire, and was entertained by Francis Dun of the same town, who having received the precious truth invited his neighbours to his house to be partakers with him of the like precious truth, as it was delivered to the said James, and great love was begotten in several of the inhabitants to the truth, and to this day and for ever shall come to bless the God of our lives."

Passing over twenty years we find ourselves in more troubled and less tolerant times.

We will give several extracts which show the difficulties in which these Christian people were then placed,

and the quiet persistency with which they held on to their practice of meetings for prayer, the study of the Scriptures, and teaching of the truth according to the inward divine light vouchsafed to them.

Names are given more fully than they else would have been, because of the interest they are likely to occasion to representatives and descendants now living in and about Bluntisham.

The following entry appears to be a copy of the warrant issued on account of a meeting, of which and its consequences an account is given in the Friends' record: "To ye Constables, Church-wardens and Overseers of ye poor for ye town of ffeun-Stanton. Whereas there was a seditious meeting or conventicle, held in ye dwelling house of Thomas Bundy of Bluntisham in ye County of Huntingdon upon Tuesday the 19th of October 1675 when there were present about twenty four persons and a speaker or teacher, all above ye age of 16 ys. old.....of religious worship contrary to the liturgy of ye church of England as by ye oathes of sufficient witnesses was made to appear before mee, contrary to ye laws in such cases made and provided as by the reward duly appeared."

Our next extract is the account of this meeting written by the Friends in their book: "The 19th of 8th Month 1675, there being a peaceable meeting at the house of Thomas Bundy according to the usual manner of ffriends to wait upon god, where was John Edward exhorting the people to an holy life and a godly conversation and speaking to the praise of his most holy name who hath loved us—And about the middle of the meeting time there came John Potts of Somersham and Thomas Gilbie of Bluntisham, Informers, in a very deboÿst violent manner and pulled down the said John Edward, and would have had

him away by force to Nicholas Johnson (called a Justice) but they having no warrant did not get him away with them, but one of them went to get a warrant and in the mean time the meeting was ended and ffriends departed: but the said Informers informed the s^d^ Nicholas Johnson that it was a seditious conventicle, whereupon he issued out his warrants to distrain the goods and chatels of friends as followeth (viz.) Tobias Hardmeat of ffenn = Stanton for the same meeting for his own offence fined 5*s.* and for the poverty of the speaker or preacher unknown and fled £9. 15*s.* Tobias in all fined £10, for which fine Thomas Gilbie informed—and another man (who says that he was not informer but that he was hired to come with him) came to William Sibley's of the s^d^. town and meeting with the officers, namely, Emmanuel Offley, Constable, Mark Morgan one Warder, Rieland Harvie, one overseer for the poor for the s^d^. ffenn=Stanton, and having a warrant from ye s^d^. Nicholas Johnson, came and demanded the money of Tobias Hardmeate, but he told them he would not give them two farthings to take it of them, and said to them, if they would have his goods, they might take them, as they would answer it before him that gave him them, and they went and took two horses worth about £6—a cow worth about £3—and a feeding hog worth about £1. 10*s.*—and kept them one night at William Sibley's, and the next morning cryed them at the town and having no chapman to buy them, Emmanuel Offley went and forced a poor man named Richard Hawkins, who when he understood their business, was very unwilling to serve them, but he pulled him and knipped him by the arm and threatened him to make it cost him his cow, if he would not go to help away with the goods to Somersham, and so he went, and young

Robert Allpress went without forcing hoping to get a great reward for his pains. So they sent them away to Nicholas Johnson and Emmanuel Offley, John Peaverall and John Martin junr., at the pound, went for to meet him there, and when they were there, Nich. Johnson ordered them to be put up at ye sign of the bull, where he and his informer made what markets they pleased, having none to be chapmen but themselves, and what price they set on them they went at which was £7—and Nich. Johnson gave the constable five shillings for their charges and encouraged them as good and diligent officers."

"Thomas Bundy for wittingly and willingly suffering the conventicles to be kept in his dwelling-house fined £20. Thomas Seaburne for his second offence fined ten shillings for which was taken from him one cow worth fifty shillings. William Bavin for his own offence fined ten shillings for which was taken from him one cow worth fifty shillings. Matthew Broadway for his own offence fined ten shillings. Widow Green for her own offence fined ten shillings. John Nun for his own offence fined ten shillings, for which a coffer of linen and other goods were taken from him worth fifty shillings. The said John Nun was also fined five shillings for his Wife's offence. William Gill for his own offence fined ten shillings. Lawrence Dunch for his own offence fined five shillings. William Evings for the offence of his Wife fined five shillings. Thomas Hodson for his own offence fined ten shillings."

"At a meeting at Earith at the house of Amy Peacock widdow the 27th of 12th month (16/75) Thos. Gilbie and John Potts Informants, who gave information thereof upon oath to Anthony Hammond of Somersham, where-

upon he issued out his warrants for the distraining of goods and chattels of the persons hereunder named.

Thomas Bundy for his 2nd offence fined ten shillings.
Thos. Hodson " "
Wm. Hodson for his 1st offence fined five shillings.
Matthew Broadway for his 2nd offence fined ten shillings.
John Nun " "

and the said John Nun for the second offence of his Wife fined ten shillings.

All the above were of Bluntsham.

Amy Peacock, Earith, fined for the house £20.
Benjamin Thornton.
Richard Bass.
Thomas Cook.
Edward Christenwheate.
Ann Hull.
} all of Earith.

for the same meeting fined ten shillings.

Thomas Burgis, Richard Triploe, Richard Taylor, Thomas Peete all fined for the same meeting."

Here is another entry of interest to us.

"Whereas these several persons inhabiting within the said parish of Bluntisham being all of the age of 16 years and upwards, and subjects of this realm of England have been duly convicted before me Anthony Hammond esq. one of his majesty's justices of the peace for the said county, upon the oath and information of two credible witnesses for being present with others to the number of fifty persons and upwards upon the 7th day of February now last past, at an assembly, conventicle or meeting under colour and pretence of exercise of religion (other) than according to the liturgy and practice of the church of England in the barn belonging to the dwelling house of

Amy Peacock, Widow, situate in Earith in the said county of Hunts. who wittingly and willingly suffered the same at which said meeting or assembly or conventicle there was a certain man unknown to the said informers who then and there preached to the rest of the said persons contrary to a late act of the present parliament in the case made and provided. (1676)."

Another entry is as follows.

"At a meeting of the people of the Lord at the house of Amy Peacock of Earith, Widow, on 23rd of 2nd month called April, 1676, A person (viz. George Whitehead) being there, that was moved by God's eternal Spirit to preach the everlasting gospel with wholesome exhortations to the fear of the Lord, there came unto the said meeting these Informers Stephen Perry of Cambridge, Thomas Gilbie of Bluntisham and John Somersham who having been in long season in an Alehouse came into the meeting like madmen, threatening and pulling people, not regarding either age or sex, to the hurt of some women present and being demanded of a friend (Jasper Robins by name) what authority they had for so doing, they replied they had a commission from the King to break up the meeting, the aforesaid Jasper Robins speaking to the constables that came with the Informers to keep the peace, and if any of them had a warrant from any Justice we would obey it, and the said Informants pretended they had one, but it appeared they had not, but came in their own wills, in that violent and drunken spirit, so they going away in a rage, especially against the aforesaid Jasper because he desired the constables to set them in the stocks for their drunken behaviour, but some weeks after they went to one John Tryse of Godmanchester and made a complaint that the aforesaid

Jasper had spoken certain evil words against the King [yet] invented only in their own wicked hearts, and then also informed of the meeting, so that the said Jasper Robins and others were fined, and he bound to answer their complaint at the next quarter sessions, he knowing his own innocency therein, and that the constables and others were all the.....when they pretended he spoke these words.....to the court which upon the 3rd Quarter Sessions was obtained and the matter being heard their wickedness was manifested and the jury gave in their verdict that the said Jasper was not guilty and the informers aforesaid seen to be guilty of perjury in the sight of God and man. The persons fined for the said meeting were these following, Thomas Parnell, Ripton Regis for ye said meeting for his own offence and ye pretended povertie of ye preacher fined ten shillings. Benjn. Thornley, Edward Christenwheate, Thos. Cooke, Richard Basse all of Earith. William Bavin of Bluntisham fined five shillings, three swine taken from him worth thirty-four shillings, William Prior of Somersham, being a young man and newly come out of his apprenticeship, and so poor as to the outwards that he had little or nothing but his wearing clothes, was fined for the said meeting five shillings. For which the officers of the said town of Somersham, he being in bed, took away his clothes and left him nothing of his meane apparel but one hose, insomuch that he was forced to borrow clothes to cover his nakedness until he had laboured for more. His clothes were valued at ten shillings."

We must also give this entry which is of interest to us.

"Whereas Thomas Seabourne of Bluntisham, Labourer, Sarah Greene of the same town, Widow, Thomas Bundy

of the same town, Husbandman, and Mary his Wife, Thos. Hodson of the same town ffalle. William Bavin of the same town Sheepsherd, John Nun of ye same town, bodys-maker, and Margaret his Wife, Lawrence Dunch of the same, Labourer, Mark Willigor, Apprentice to ye said John Nun, of the same, all of them of Bluntisham in the county aforesaid amongst others. All and every of them above the age of 16 years and subjects of ye realm, were taken and known to be an unlawful assembly, meeting, or conventicle, at or upon ye 3rd day of April last past in a barn belonging to a dwelling house of Amy Peacock of Earith, Widow, there assembled being above the number of five persons over and besides ye said household under colour and pretence of exercise of religion in other manner than according to ye liturgie and practice of the church of England, as by a reward and conviction therefore made by me John Tryce esq. one of his majesty's Justices of the Peace...by virtue of an act of parliament entitled an act to prevent seditious conventicles. (1676).

Names of persons suffering their goods to be taken rather than pay tithe.

Ed. Christenwheate, John Browne, fisherman, John Cranwell, all of Earith.

George Purkis, Robert Chabb, Abraham Purkis, Thos. Barr, all of Bluntisham.

Richard Jennings, John Rignoll, Thos. Butler, Richd. Taylor, Willm. Colling, all of Colne."

CHAPTER XII.

Religious Influence in the Eighteenth Century.

We have now brought our history of the religious influences bearing upon Bluntisham and its neighbourhood down to the close of the 17th century. Through the succeeding century, the different centres of religious life—the foundations of which we have traced in the 17th century—are diffusing spiritual life and energy. There is the influential Presbyterian church at St Ives. There are the Baptist churches at Fenstanton and Warboys founded by Henry Denne. For a time at least the Independent churches at Needingworth and Kimbolton, founded by the church at Rowell, and those founded by Holcroft and Oddy. And at Bluntisham there are the Quakers. During the reign of William and Mary, Nonconformists were tolerated, and were free to worship as they chose. Civil rights equal with those of their fellow-subjects would have been granted them had the king and queen not been frustrated in their intention by the High-church party. But the new sovereign, queen Anne, as her reign lengthened, became increasingly swayed by the genius of her family traditions. She hated the mention of her Hanoverian successor, and would have had the Pretender to succeed her on the throne—a Laud for the Church and a Strafford for the State would have been to her mind.

On Sunday morning, the 1st of August, 1714—the very day on which the infamous "Schism Act" was to come into force—Thomas Bradbury, the Congregational minister of Fetter Lane meeting-house—bold Bradbury as Queen Anne styled him—was walking dejectedly through Smithfield, when he met Bishop Burnet. The bishop called to him from his carriage, and inquired, "why he seemed so troubled?" Bradbury replied, "I am thinking whether I shall have the constancy and resolution of that noble company of martyrs whose ashes are deposited in this place; for I most assuredly expect to see similar times of violence and persecution, and that I shall be called to suffer in a like cause." The bishop, endeavouring to calm him, informed Bradbury that the queen had been given over by her physicians, and was expected every hour to die, and that he himself was on his way to Court. He offered to send a messenger to Bradbury to give him the earliest intelligence of the queen's death, and arranged that, if the messenger should find Bradbury in his pulpit, he should go into the gallery of Fetter Lane meeting-house and drop a handkerchief. The queen died the same morning, and while Bradbury was preaching, the messenger arrived, and dropped his handkerchief from the front gallery. The preacher made no reference to the event in his sermon, but in the succeeding prayer he offered public thanks for the delivery of the nation, and implored the Divine blessing on King George the Ist. and the house of Hanover. He then asked the congregation to sing the eighty-ninth Psalm. It is said that, shortly after, Bradbury preached from the text, "Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her, for she is a king's daughter."

Under the Hanoverian dynasty the struggle would be

not how to *preserve*, but how to *extend* freedom. Henceforth the free churches may feel secure in the freedom granted them under king William to worship as and where they choose. But the spirit of persecution and intolerance was not dead, it is the produce of bigotry, which is bred of stupidity and passion. It lived to assert itself against each religious revival of the century—against every advance towards the freedom of the individual, both in his social and national capacities and in the exercise of his mental and moral powers.

The State, the Established Church, "society," the religious sects,—in all of them there lurked this evil spirit of intolerance and persecution, which led people to act unjustly, and, whether successful or not in its efforts to repress free speech and free action, it created bitterness and hatred—except in the hearts of those in whom the spirit of Christ dwelt in sufficient force to lift them above the sway of human bigotry and passion, into the light and love and sweet reasonableness of his heavenly kingdom.

Of all the revivals of the 17th century that due to the exertions of Whitfield and the Wesleys was the earliest and the most far reaching. All three were Oxford men, and had been ordained priests in the English church. Their incessant labours, their earnest gospel preaching, their devoted lives, were the outcome of supreme love for Christ and for the souls of men. In Scotland and Ireland and in the American States, as well as through England and Wales, their influence was felt in every county, town, and village. When the churches were closed to them, and when no building would hold the immense crowds that flocked everywhere to hear them, they preached in the open air, in the churchyards,

in the streets, in the fields, at fairs and gatherings of all sorts. Thousands came together to hear them—the artizans of the great cities, the workers in the coal districts—the Cornish miners, the weavers of the north, and the peasants from the farms. Everywhere the degraded the outcast and the miserable flocked to hear these eloquent earnest men, whose message of the free forgiveness of God and His great salvation through Jesus Christ to all who were truly penitent, came from their hearts, and was proclaimed with a force which seemed more than human. Awe pervaded the congregations, and a sense that the power which moved them was from heaven. The influence wielded, and the marvellous change effected, by these earliest revivalists of the Church of England, demands, in our history of the religious influences bearing upon our subject, more than a bare mention. We therefore will allow space for some description of these remarkable men, and also add short memorials of several of those Church of England clergy who sympathised with them in their religious work, and stood prominently out as evangelical preachers.

Of these, Fletcher of Madely, Venn of Huddersfield, Grimshaw of Haworth, Romaine of Blackfriars and Berridge of Everton were the chief. Venn made Huddersfield the centre of the most untiring evangelistic labours; he subsequently removed to Yelling in Hunts. But of all the founders of the Evangelical party in the Church, Berridge of Everton was the most conspicuous. His evangelistic powers were only surpassed by the three Apostles of the early movement. Everton in his time was a place where thousands from all the country round crowded to hear its extraordinary preacher, and to share in the wonderful revival of which it was the centre.

Berridge's eccentricity probably contributed in no small degree to his personal popularity. He was possessed of a rough and ready wit, which he used unsparingly in his public addresses, as well as in private intercourse. There is this additional reason for sketches of the lives of two of these good men—Venn and Berridge—they were personally known to Mr Coxe Feary, and lived in his neighbourhood. Venn might almost be called his spiritual father.

Some good influence must have been exercised by the Reverend Daniel Whiston, who for more than fifty years was curate of Somersham for conscience' sake—so we gather from a mural tablet erected to his memory in Somersham Church, and from the interesting memoirs of William Whiston, who tells us that his brother never sought preferment, owing to his conscientious objection to sign the Thirty-nine Articles and to read the Athanasian Creed, which he never would do, and on this account was subjected to a prosecution, quashed however by the influence of a neighbouring nobleman. Daniel Whiston's influence in the eighteenth century should not go unacknowledged.

CHAPTER XIII.

John Wesley.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodists, was born at Epworth in Lincolnshire in the year 1703, and was educated at Oxford. He and his brother Charles, with Whitfield, James Hervey and a few others, formed a society, to the members of which the title of "Methodists" was given—a name signifying "living by rule or method," used in the previous century to describe "those who stood up for God," as Dr Calamy observes in his "Ejected Ministers." In the year 1738, Wesley visited the Moravian settlement at Herrnhut, in Germany. It was from the Moravians in England that he learned the necessity of a simple but living faith, and it was from the preaching of Christian David at Herrnhut that he learned with what forcible effect the doctrine of "the righteousness and the blood of Christ," might be presented, and his sermons shew how he profited by the lesson. He also heard from Christian David and his brethren, accounts of their "*experience*"—the state of feeling and conflict they had passed through—before they attained settled religious peace.

Following Whitfield at Bristol, Wesley reluctantly preached in the open air, after having been present at a service Whitfield held the day before he left Bristol. Wesley's great success at Bristol and its neighbourhood

encouraged him to further independent action, and on the day after his return to London he accompanied Whitfield to Blackheath, where about 13,000 persons were assembled to hear him preach. When Whitfield requested Wesley to take his place, he was surprised, and somewhat unwillingly assented, for he says, "nature recoiled." Thus through Whitfield's example and influence Wesley's strong ecclesiastical prejudices yielded, and henceforth he started on his marvellous career of missionary preaching. In old age accounting for the wonderful vigour he preserved unimpaired, he gives as one reason, "that he never travelled less by sea or land than four thousand five hundred miles in a year!"

The extent of his travels over the United Kingdom and Ireland and America, is so well known, that it is unnecessary to say more on this subject. The number of his followers shows his power of attraction and organization. Whether in country places, or in great cities, he drew enormous crowds to hear him. The risks he ran from furious mobs and angry clergymen would fill a volume, but nothing daunted, he allowed none of these things to stop him from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sometimes the cry was raised, "Knock his brains out!" "Down with him!" "Kill him at once!" and on one occasion, "Crucify the dog! Crucify him!" But in all, he was full of faith and courage. Sometimes when he had finished his discourse and pronounced the blessing, not a person offered to move; the charm was on them still; man, woman and child, remained where they were till he set the example of leaving the ground. One day many of his hearers were seated upon a long wall, built of loose stones as is common in the northern counties. In the middle of the sermon it fell. Wesley says, "The whole

wall, and the persons sitting upon it, sunk down together, none of them screaming out, and very few altering their position, and not one was hurt at all; but they appeared sitting at the bottom, just as they sat at the top. Nor was there any interruption either of my speaking, or of the attention of the hearers." His vocal powers were marvellous. In the seventieth year of his age, he preached at Gwennap to the largest assembly that ever collected to hear him; from the ground which they covered, he computed them to be not fewer than two and thirty thousand, and it was found upon inquiry that all could hear. Gwennap was a favourite preaching place of his, he relates:—"At Gwennap I stood upon the wall, in the calm of the evening, with the setting sun behind me, and almost an innumerable multitude before, behind, and on either hand. Many likewise sat on the little hills, at some distance from the bulk of the congregation, but they could all hear distinctly while I read, 'the disciple is not above his Master.'" He said of this amphitheatre in his old age: "I think this is one of the most magnificent spectacles which is to be seen on this side heaven. And no music is to be heard upon earth, comparable to the sound of many thousand voices, when they are all harmoniously joined together, singing praises to God and the Lamb."

Southey describes Mr Wesley's venerable appearance when about eighty years of age. "His face was remarkably fine; his complexion fresh to the last week of his life; his eye quick and keen and active; when you met him in the street of a crowded city, he attracted notice, not only by his band and cassock, and his long hair, white and bright as silver, but by his pace and manner, both indicating that all his minutes were numbered, and that not

one was to be lost." In his eighty-fourth year he first began to feel decay, and upon commencing his eighty-fifth, he observes, "I am not so agile as I was in times past; I do not run or walk so fast as I did, my sight is a little decayed. I feel no decay in my hearing, smell, taste or appetite, (though I want but the third part of the food I did once), nor do I feel any such a thing as weariness, either in travelling or preaching." His younger brother Charles died in his eightieth year, and in him he lost a faithful and affectionate friend and coadjutor. John Wesley preached at Lambeth on the 17th Feb. 1791, took cold, struggled on against an increasing fever, but continued to preach for several days after. On the 2nd March he died in peace, in the eighty-eighth year of his age and the sixty-fifth of his ministry. The reform he wrought in the religious life of his time was wonderful. At his death, he left in the British dominions and in America 511 preachers and 134,589 members.

CHAPTER XIV.

George Whitfield.

George Whitfield was ordained priest of the Established Church in 1739, and at once began to preach in London. Though the churches were large and crowded exceedingly, many hundreds stood in the churchyard, and hundreds more returned home. When he preached in some of the City churches at six o'clock on Sunday mornings, in the latter months of the year, long before day you might see in the streets people with lanterns going to hear him. The effects of his preaching were wonderful. In Feb. he was at Bristol and preached at Kingswood on Sunday to a congregation of ten thousand people—the numbers continually increasing all the time he was there. A flame of holy love was kindled, which could not be easily put out. It was afterwards kindled in Wales, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. Indeed wherever he went God abundantly confirmed the word of his messenger. On Sunday April 29, 1739, he preached for the first time in Moorfields and on Kennington Common, where the thousands of hearers were, says Wesley, "as quiet as they could have been in a church". From the situation of the ground and the laxity of the police, Moorfields had become a royalty of the rabble, a place for mountebanks and merry-andrews, where fairs were held during the holy-days, and

where at all times the dissolute and the reprobate resorted,—the pests of society. Preaching in Moorfields Whitfield called, attacking Satan in his stronghold. Many persons told him he would never come away from the place alive. They knew not the power of impassioned eloquence upon a topic in which every hearer was vitally concerned; and they wronged the mob who seldom are guilty of atrocities till they are deluded or misled. On one occasion the table which had been placed for him was broken in pieces by the crowd; he took his stand therefore upon a wall and preached without interruption. His favourite ground upon week-days was Kennington Common, and there prodigious multitudes gathered to hear him; sometimes eighty carriages, very many horsemen, and from thirty to forty thousand persons on foot; and both there and at his Sunday preachings in Moorfields, when he collected for the Orphan-House, so many halfpence were given him by his poor auditors that he was wearied in receiving them. At Moorfields more than £20 of the collection were in halfpence.

Several instances are given in Dr Southey's sketch of Whitfield, of his influence and power in preaching. A man at Exeter stood with stones in his pocket, and one in his hand, ready to attack; but dropped it before the sermon was far advanced, and going up after the preaching was over, he said, "Sir, I came to hear you with the intention to break your head: but God through your ministry has given me a broken heart." A ship-builder was once asked what he thought of him. "Think! I tell you, Sir, every Sunday that I go to my parish church I can build a ship from stem to stern under the sermon; but, were it to save my soul, under Mr Whitfield, I could not lay a single plank." Hume said it was worth going

twenty miles to hear him. But perhaps the greatest proof of his persuasive powers was, when he drew from Franklin's pocket the money which that clear cool reasoner had determined not to give for the orphan house at Savannah. Franklin disagreed with his plan, and with the expenses incurred in carrying it out. Hearing Whitfield soon after his decision and "perceiving that he intended to finish with a collection, I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften and concluded to give the copper; another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and determined me to give the silver; and he finished so admirably, that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all."

The man who produced this extraordinary effect had many natural advantages. He was something above the middle stature, well proportioned, though at that time (about 1739) slender, and remarkable for a native gracefulness of manner. His complexion was very fair, his features regular, his eyes small and lively, of a dark blue colour; in recovering from the measles he had contracted a squint with one of them; but the peculiarity rather rendered the expression of his countenance more easily remembered, and did not in any degree lessen the effect of its uncommon sweetness. His voice excelled both in melody and compass, and its fine modulations were happily accompanied by that grace of action which has been said to be the chief requisite of an orator. An ignorant man once described his eloquence oddly, but strikingly, when he said that Mr Whitfield preached like a lion. So strange a comparison conveyed no inapt a

notion of the force and vehemence and passion of that oratory which awed its hearers, and made them tremble like Felix before the Apostle. For believing himself to be the messenger of God, commissioned to call sinners to repentance, he spoke as one conscious of his high credentials; yet in all his discourses there was a fervent and melting charity; an earnestness of persuasion, partaking the virtue of that faith from which it flowed, inasmuch as it seemed to enter the heart which it pierced, and to heal the wounds it made.

Whitfield died at Newberry in America on the 30th September, 1770. In infirm health, yet preaching every day, he set out on Saturday the 29th for Boston, but before he came to Newberry, where he had engaged to preach the following day, he was importuned to preach by the way. He did so to a number of people assembled in a field, but this so exhausted his strength that when he came to Newberry he could not get out of the ferry-boat without the help of two men. In the evening however he recovered his spirits and cheerfulness. He went to his chamber at nine o'clock, his fixed time, from which no company could divert him. He rose at four the next morning: after awhile he reclined for about ten minutes on his bed: then fell on his knees, and prayed most fervently to God that, "If it were consistent with his will, he might that day finish his Master's work." He then desired his servant to call the clergyman at whose house he was staying, and in another minute breathed his last. An American paper says of him, "In his public labours he has, for many years, astounded the world with his eloquence and devotion. With what divine pathos did he persuade the impenitent sinner to embrace the practice of piety and virtue! Filled with the spirit of grace, he spoke

from the heart and with a fervency of zeal, perhaps unequalled since the days of the Apostles. From the pulpit he was unrivalled in the command of an ever crowded auditory; nor was he less agreeable and instructive in his private conversation. Happy in a remarkable ease of address, willing to communicate, studious to edify."

Mr John Wesley in the funeral sermon he preached for Whitfield says, "How few have we known of so kind a temper, of such large and flowing affections? Was it not principally by this that the hearts of others were so strangely drawn and knit to him? Can anything but love beget love? This shone in his very countenance, and continually breathed in all his words, whether in public or private. Was it not this which, quick and penetrating as lightning, flew from heart to heart? which gave that life to his sermons, his conversations, his letters?"

CHAPTER XV.

William Fletcher of Madely.

Jean Guillaume de la Flechere was born at Nyon, in the Pays de Vaud, Switzerland, in the year 1729. He was educated for the ministry at Geneva, but found himself unable to subscribe to the doctrine of predestination. After several attempts to gain preferment as a soldier of fortune, first at Lisbon and afterwards in the Low Countries,—frustrated by peace,—he came to England and became tutor in the family of Mr Hill, of Fern Hall in Shropshire, and through Mr Hill's influence was afterwards presented to the vicarage of Madely in this county. Whilst in Mr Hill's family he one day went out on horseback and returned home late, and not with his companions. He explained that he had stopped behind to listen to an old woman in the market-place, who was speaking so sweetly of Christ that "I knew not how the time passed away." Mrs Hill said, "Why our tutor will turn methodist bye and bye!" "Methodist, madam, pray what is that?" "Why the Methodists are people that do nothing but pray—they are praying all day and all night." "Are they?" said Mr Fletcher, "then by the help of God, I will find them out, if they are above ground!" The love of God and man abounded in his heart; and finding in the Methodists the sympathy he desired, he joined them, and

for a time took to ascetic courses of which he afterwards acknowledged the error. He lived on vegetables, and for some time on milk and water and bread: he sat up two whole nights in every week, for the purpose of praying and reading and meditating on religious things; and on the other nights did not allow himself to sleep, as long as he could keep his attention to the book before him. At length by the advice of his friends Mr Hill and Mr Wesley, whom he consulted, he took orders in the English church. He now anglicised his name to Fletcher, and on becoming Vicar of Madely applied himself to his duties with a zeal that made him equally regardless of appearances and of danger. The whole rents of his small patrimony in the Pays de Vaud were set apart for charitable use, and he drew so liberally from his other funds for the same purpose that his furniture and wardrobe were not spared. Because some of his remoter parishioners excused themselves for not attending the morning service, by pleading that they did not wake early enough to get their families ready, for some months he set out every Sunday morning at five o'clock, with a bell in his hand, and went round the distant parts of his parish, to call up the people. And wherever hearers could be collected in the surrounding country, within ten or fifteen miles, thither he went to preach to them on week-days, though he seldom got home before one or two in the morning. At first the rabble of his parishioners resented the manner in which he ventured to reprove and exhort them in the midst of their revels and riotous meetings; for he would frequently break in upon them without any fear of the consequences to himself. Publicans and maltmen were his especial enemies. A mob of colliers, who were one day baiting a bull, determined to pull him off his horse as

he went to preach, set the dogs upon him, in their own phrase to bait the parson; but the bull broke loose, and dispersed them before he arrived. In spite, however, of the opposition which his eccentricities excited, not from the ignorant only, but from some of the neighbouring clergy and magistrates, he won upon the people, rude and brutal as they were, by the invincible benevolence which was manifest in his whole manner of life, till at length his church, which had at first been so scantily attended that he was discouraged as well as mortified, began to overflow. Mr Fletcher's constant object was to promote Christian charity and Christian union. When believed to be in the last stage of a consumption, he writes, "My regard for unity recovers my drooping spirits, and adds new strength to my wasted body: I stop at the brink of the grave, over which I bend; and as the blood oozing from my decayed lungs does not permit me vocally to address my contending brethren, by means of my pen I will ask them, if they can properly receive the holy *communion*, while they *wilfully* remain in *disunion* with their brethren, from whom controversy has needlessly parted them!" This referred to the bitter controversy between the Calvinists and Arminians. He was then about to leave England for what appeared to be a forlorn hope of deriving benefit from his native air; but before his departure, he expressed his desire to see those persons with whom he had been engaged in this controversy, that he might "testify his sincere regret for having given them the least displeasure, and receive from them some condescending assurance of reconciliation and good will." Those who accepted the invitation were edified as well as affected by the interview, and expressed the highest satisfaction at being introduced to the company of one, whose air and countenance bespoke

him fitted rather for the society of angels than the conversation of men.

When Mr Fletcher offended his antagonists it was not by any personalities, or the slightest breathing of a malicious spirit, but by the ironical manner in which he treated the doctrines he combated. His talents were of the mercurial kind; his fancy was always active, he had a sense of humour, and was an impassioned writer. Distinguished by his intellectual powers he ranks high among the group of the evangelists who led the religious revival of the eighteenth century.

When seeking the restoration which no one was sanguine enough to expect, he wrote to Mr Wesley in 1770 and says, "I invite all Christians to do, what the herds do on the Swiss mountains, when the wolves make an attack on them: instead of goring one another, they unite, form a close battalion, and face the enemy on all sides." And in writing a pastoral letter to his flock he says, "I sometimes feel a desire of being buried where you are buried, and having my bones lie in a common earthen bed with yours...but I exult in thinking that neither life nor death shall ever be able, (while we hang on Christ the crucified, as He hung on the cross,) to separate us from Christ our head, nor from the love of each other, his members." But he recovered, and ascribed his almost miraculous recovery, to eating plentifully of cherries and grapes. He returned to his parish, and married Miss Bosanquet, a woman perfectly suited to him in age, temper, piety and talents. "We are two poor invalids," said he, "who, between us, make half a labourer. She sweetly helps me to drink the dregs of life, and to carry with ease the daily cross. I keep my sentry-box till Providence removes me: my situation is quite suited to my strength. I may do as

much or as little as I please, according to my weakness; and I have an advantage, which I can have no where else in such a degree: my little field of action is just at my door, so that, if I happen to overdo myself, I have but a step from my pulpit to my bed, and from my bed to my grave. If I had a body full of vigour, and a purse full of money, I should like well enough to travel about as Mr Wesley does; but as Providence does not call me to it, I readily submit. "The snail does best in its shell." This good man died in 1785, in the 56th year of his age. The circumstances of Mr Fletcher's death were as peculiar as those of his life. He had taken cold, and a considerable degree of fever had been induced; but no persuasion could prevail on him to stay from church on the Sunday, nor even to allow any part of the service to be performed for him. He said it was the will of the Lord that he should go; and assured his wife and friends that God would strengthen him to go through the duties of the day. Before he had proceeded far in the service he grew pale, and faltered in his speech, and could scarcely keep himself from fainting. The congregation were greatly affected and alarmed; and Mrs Fletcher, pressing through the crowd, earnestly entreated him not to persevere in what was so evidently beyond his strength. He recovered, however, when the windows were opened, exerted himself against the mortal illness which he felt, went through the service, and preached with remarkable earnestness and effect, for his parishioners plainly saw that the hand of death was upon him. After the sermon he walked to the communion-table, saying, "I am going to throw myself under the wings of the Cherubim, before the Mercy-seat!" "Here" (it is his widow who describes this last extraordinary effort of enthusiastic devotion) "the same dis-

tressing scene was renewed, with additional solemnity. The people were deeply affected while they beheld him offering up the last languid remains of a life that had been lavishly spent in their service. In going through this last part of his duty he was exhausted again and again; but his spiritual vigour triumphed over his bodily weakness. After several times sinking on the sacramental table, he still resumed his sacred work, and cheerfully distributed, with his dying hands, the love memorials of his dying Lord. In the course of this concluding office, which he performed by means of the most astonishing exertions, he gave out several verses of hymns, and delivered many affectionate exhortations to his people, calling upon them, at intervals, to celebrate the mercy of God in short songs of adoration and praise. And now, having struggled through a service of near four hours' continuance, he was supported, with blessings in his mouth, from the altar to his chamber, where he lay for some time in a swoon, and from whence he never walked into the world again." On the Sunday following he died; and that day also was distinguished by circumstances not less remarkable. A supplicatory hymn for his recovery was sung in the church; and one who was present says, it is impossible to convey an idea of the burst of sorrow that accompanied it. "The whole village wore an air of consternation and sadness. Hasty messengers were passing to and fro, with anxious inquiries and confused reports; and the members of every family sat together in silence that day, awaiting with trembling expectation the issue of every hour." After the evening service, several of the poor, who came from a distance, and who were usually entertained under his roof, lingered about the house, and expressed an earnest wish that they might see their expiring pastor. Their

desire was granted. The door of his chamber was set open; directly opposite to which he was sitting upright in his bed, with the curtains undrawn, "unaltered in his usual venerable appearance;" and they passed along the gallery, one by one, pausing as they passed by the door, to look upon him for the last time. A few hours after he breathed his last, without a struggle or groan, in perfect peace and in the fulness of faith and hope. Mr Wesley says, "I was intimate with him for thirty years. Many exemplary men have I known, holy in heart and life, within fourscore years; but one equal to him I have not known—so unblamable a character in every respect, I have not found either in Europe or America. Nor do I expect to find another such on this side of eternity." Fletcher in any communion would have been a saint.

CHAPTER XVI.

William Grimshaw of Haworth.

The influence exercised by William Grimshaw, incumbent of Haworth, was very great; his parishioners are said to have been as wild as the black barren country they inhabited, and to have had little more sense of religion than their cattle—yet he tamed them and brought them under his control.

John Newton says, "One Sunday, as a man was passing through Haworth on horseback, his horse lost a shoe. He applied to the village blacksmith to put it on. To his surprise, the man told him he could not shoe a horse on the Lord's day without the minister's leave. They went together to Mr Grimshaw, and the man satisfying him that he was really in haste, going for a doctor, Mr Grimshaw permitted the blacksmith to shoe the horse, which otherwise he would not have done for double pay."

"It was his frequent custom," adds Newton, "to leave the church at Haworth while the psalm before the sermon was singing, to see if any were absent from worship and idling their time in the churchyard, the street or the alehouses; and many of those whom he so found he would drive into church before him. A friend of mine, passing a public-house in Haworth on a Lord's-day morning, saw

several persons making their escape out of it, some jumping out of the lower windows, and some over a low wall. He was at first alarmed, fearing the house was on fire; but on inquiring what was the cause of the commotion, he was only told that they saw the parson coming. They were more afraid of the parson than of a justice of the peace. His reproof was so authoritative, and yet so mild and friendly, that the stoutest sinner could not stand before him."

"He endeavoured likewise to suppress the common custom of walking in the fields on the Lord's day in summer, instead of coming to God's house. He not only bore his testimony against it from the pulpit, but went into the fields in person to detect and reprove the delinquents. There was a spot at some distance from the village, where many young people used to assemble on Sundays in spite of all his warnings. At last he disguised himself one evening, that he might not be known till he was near enough to discover who they were. He then threw off his disguise, and charged them not to move. He took down all their names with his pencil, and ordered them to attend on him at a day and hour which he appointed. They all waited on him accordingly as punctually as if they had been served with a warrant. When they came, he led them into a private room, when, after forming them into a circle and commanding them to kneel down, he kneeled down in the midst of them, and prayed for them with much earnestness for a considerable time. After rising from his knees, he gave them a close and affecting lecture. He never had occasion to repeat this friendly discipline, which entirely broke the objectionable custom."

"He was particularly watchful," says Newton, "over

those of his flock who made an open profession of religion, to see if they adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and maintained a consistent character; and he was very severe in his censures if he found any of his communicants guilty of wrong practices. When he suspected hypocrisy, he sometimes took such strange methods to detect it as perhaps few men but himself would have thought of. He had a suspicion of the sincerity of some of his hearers, who made great pretence to religion. In order to find out one of them, he disguised himself as a poor man, and applied to him for relief and a lodging, and behold! this person, who wished to be thought very good and charitable, treated him with some abuse. He then went to another house, to a woman who was almost blind. He touched her gently with his stick, and went on doing it until she, supposing it was done by some children in the neighbourhood, began not only to threaten, but to swear at them. Thus he was confirmed in his apprehensions."

Hardy tells us, "That at a cottage meeting, some of Grimshaw's people had to endure much annoyance and persecution, and for a long time no one could discover who the delinquents were. At last the Incumbent came to their assistance and solved the mystery. He put on an old woman's cap and peeped stealthily from behind the door, and then appeared to grow rather bolder, while he quietly made the observation he wished. He found there was a set of rude boys, who only came to make sport and annoy others. They soon began to make fun of the old woman (as she seemed to be), and defied her with mocks and menaces. In this way they were all found out and brought to justice, and then the persecution ceased."

He carried his humility and simplicity of living to

such an extent that he thought anything good enough for himself, if he could only shew a Christian brother kindness and hospitality. A godly friend, who once came to stay a night with him, was surprised on looking out of his bedroom window in the morning, to see Grimshaw with his own hands cleaning his guest's boots! Nor was this all. On coming downstairs he discovered that Grimshaw had actually given up his own bed-room for his accommodation, and had spent the night in a hay-loft! This was on a preaching occasion, when his house was filled with visitors.

His ways in his own parish, as he went about doing the work of a pastor, were very peculiar. Hardy says, "When he met with any in the lanes he would enter into familiar conversation with them, and generally asked if they were accustomed to pray. When they answered in the affirmative and he doubted their sincerity, he bade them kneel down and show him how they performed this duty. There were sometimes scenes by the road-side in consequence, that a stranger could not look at without a smile; but to the persons concerned these inquiries were, in some instances, the means of awakening concern about their souls. The tradition of the district is, that '*he would rive them* from horseback to make them pray.' Once on his way to Colne he overtook an old woman, and asked her where she was going. She replied, 'to hear Grimshaw.' He pitied her many infirmities; but she said 'her heart was already there, and she would make the body follow.' Struck by her earnestness, he took her up behind him on the pillion of his own horse, and thus enabled her to reach the place without further toil."

One of the most remarkable and well authenticated anecdotes about Grimshaw is in connection with Haworth

races. These races were an annual festival got up by the inn-keepers, and a great occasion of drunkenness and profligacy. For some time Grimshaw attempted in vain to stop them. "At last," says John Newton, "unable to prevail with men, he addressed himself to God. For some time before the races he made it a subject of fervent prayer that the Lord would be pleased to interfere, and to stop these evil proceedings in his own way. When the race-time came the people assembled as usual, but they were soon dispersed. Before the races could begin dark clouds covered the sky, and such excessively heavy rain fell that the people could not remain on the ground, and it continued to rain incessantly during the three days appointed for the races. This event was much spoken of in Haworth. It became a sort of proverbial saying among the people that old Grimshaw put a stop to the races by his prayers. And it proved an effectual stop. There were no more races at Haworth."

He was very particular in enforcing order and devout behaviour among the sleepers in his church. Carelessness and inattention were openly rebuked; and he would not proceed with the service until he saw every person present in the attitude of devotion. Some of his hearers certainly deserved great attention and encouragement. Not a few came ten or twelve miles every Sunday to attend his ministry. One John Madden of Bacup often walked to Haworth on a Sunday and returned the same evening, a distance out and home of nearly forty miles. Towards the close of his life, when some of his friends, in tenderness to his health, wished him to spare himself, he would answer—'Let me labour now; I shall have rest enough by and by, I cannot do enough for Christ, who has done so much for me.' Romaine says

"He was the most humble walker with God I ever met with; insomuch that he could never bear to hear any commendations of his usefulness, or anything which belonged to him. His last words were, 'Here goes an unprofitable servant!'" He died in 1763.

His directions for his burial are like his life. The number of attendants was to be twenty "religious or relative friends, or both." He would have only a plain poor man's burial, and a plain poor man's coffin of elm boards, with the words on the cover, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." All the way to the church suitable verses were to be sung, in various selected metres and tunes, out of the 23rd, 39th and 91st Psalms, and also suitable hymns. One of the attendants at least was to be a Methodist preacher, and he was to preach a funeral sermon from the text on the coffin. The Methodist preacher selected for the occasion was his old friend and fellow labourer Henry Venn of Huddersfield. "He was followed to the grave by a great multitude who beheld his corpse with affectionate sighs and tears, and who still cannot hear his much loved name without weeping for the guide of their souls."

Grimshaw entered entirely into and agreed with Wesley's views, and acted as assistant in the circuit wherein he resided. When Whitfield or Wesley came to visit him, a scaffold was erected for them in the churchyard, the church not being large enough to hold the concourse that assembled. Prayers therefore were read in the church, but the preaching was in the open air, and the sacrament was afterwards administered to successive congregations, one church-full after another. Whitfield happened, in one of his sermons, to speak as if he believed his hearers had profited much by the exertions of the faithful pastor

who had so long laboured amongst them, but Grimshaw stood up, and interrupted him immediately, saying with a loud voice, "Oh Sir, for God's sake do not speak so! I pray you, do not flatter them; I fear the greater part of them are going to hell with their eyes open."

His admiration of the itinerants was very great; his house was their home, they preached in his kitchen, and he always gave notice at church when this would be; and, that their flock might not be scattered after his death, when a more regular and less zealous minister should succeed him, he built a chapel and dwelling-house at his own expense, and settled it upon the Methodist plan. Once he embraced a preacher after his sermon, and said, "The Lord bless thee, Ben; this is worth a hundred of my sermons!" And he bowed down before another, saying, he was not worthy to stand in his presence.

CHAPTER XVII.

John Berridge of Everton.

In a sketch of the life of Berridge by the Rev. J. C. Ryle, we are told he was never married and lived entirely alone. He was born at Kingston, Notts. May 1, 1716, within a very few years of Whitfield, Wesley, Grimshaw, Romaine, and Rowlands. His father was a wealthy farmer and grazier at Kingston. His brother Thomas lived and died at Chatteris, Isle of Ely, and survived John. His father designed John for his own business, but John never took to it, and eventually was entered at Clare Hall, Cambridge, in 1734. He was elected Fellow of his college, and resided there till 1749. He was a hard reading man, and made such progress in every branch of literature that he obtained a high reputation in the University as a thorough scholar. A clergyman who knew him well for fifty years said that he was as familiar with Greek and Latin as he was with his mother tongue. He says himself that he sometimes, at this period of his life, read fifteen hours a day. His natural love of humour and his social disposition entailed on him many temptations. His acquaintance was courted by people of high rank and position; and men like the elder Pitt, afterwards Lord Chatham, were among his intimate associates and friends. Hudibras (says Whittingham his bio-

grapher) was so familiar to him that he was at no loss in using any part of it on any occasion. While he was at college, if it was known he would be present at any public dinner, the table was sure to be crowded with company, who were delighted with the singularity of his conversation and his witty sayings. About this period of his life he took holy orders as a Fellow of Clare College. In 1749 after eleven years of apparent idleness he began to feel a desire to do something as a clergyman, and accepted the curacy of Stapleford, near Cambridge, being then thirty-three years old. He took pains with his parishioners, and his preaching was striking, plain and attractive, and his life was moral and correct. His diligence as a pastor was undeniable. Yet his ministry throughout these six years was entirely without fruit, to his own great annoyance and mortification. The fact was, that up to this time he was utterly ignorant of the gospel.

In the year 1755, Berridge was presented by his college to the vicarage of Everton in Bedfordshire. He took up his residence at once at his living, and never moved away till he died, holding his cure for thirty-eight years. His biographer says, "At Everton Mr Berridge at first pressed sanctification and regeneration on his hearers as strenuously as he had at Stapleford, and with as little success. Having continued for two years in this unsuccessful mode of preaching, and his desire to do good continually increasing, he began to be discouraged. Doubts arose in his own mind as to whether he was right himself. These secret misgivings brought to him embarrassment and distress, and he cried continually to God for direction in these simple words, 'Lord, if I am right, keep me so; and if I am not right, make me

so, and lead me to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.' As he sat one morning—some time in the year 1758—musing on a text of Scripture, these words seemed to dart into his mind like a voice from heaven, "Cease from thine own works, only believe." Immediately he began to think on the words "faith," and "believe," and looking into his concordance found them very frequently used. This surprised him so much, that he instantly resolved to preach Jesus Christ and salvation by faith. He therefore composed several sermons of this description and addressed his hearers in a manner very unusual, and far more pointed than before. God soon began to bless this new style of ministry. One of his parishioners came to inquire for him, 'Well, Sarah, what is the matter?' 'Matter,' she replied, 'why I don't know what is the matter! These new sermons! I find we are all to be lost now. I can neither eat, drink nor sleep, and I dont know what is to become of me.' The same week came two or three more on a like errand." So confirmed was Mr Berridge in his belief that his recent impressions were from God that he determined in future to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified. He immediately burnt his old sermons. He himself says, "I preached up sanctification by the works of the law very earnestly for six years in Stapleford and never brought one soul to Christ. I did the same at Everton for two years without any success at all. But as soon as I preached Jesus Christ and faith in His blood, then believers were added to the church continually, then people flocked from all parts to hear the glorious sound of the Gospel; some coming six miles, others eight and others ten." His next step was to commence preaching outside his own parish, all over the district in which he

lived. This he began on June 22, 1758, and on May 14, 1759 he writes: "On the way to Meldred, we called at a farmhouse. After dinner I went into the yard, and seeing nearly one hundred and fifty people, I called for a table, and preached for the first time in the open air. We then went to Meldred, where I preached in a field to about four thousand people." The extent of his labours became prodigious. He used to preach in every part of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, and in many parts of Hertfordshire, Essex and Suffolk. He would often preach twelve times and ride a hundred miles in a week. When we find that he was the means of awakening no less than four thousand persons in one single year, we may have some little idea of the good that he did in his district by his thirty years' preaching. The work that Berridge did among farmers and labourers had few to proclaim and chronicle it. At certain periods of his ministry curious physical effects were produced similar to those produced by the preaching of Wesley, but he never encouraged these perplexing phenomena.

Berridge tells us, "Soon after I began to preach the Gospel of Christ at Everton, the church was filled from the villages around us, and the neighbouring clergy felt themselves hurt at their churches being deserted. A person of my own parish, too, was much offended. He did not like to see so many strangers, and be so incommoded. Between them it was resolved, if possible, to turn me out of my living. For this purpose they complained to the bishop of the diocese, that I had preached out of my parish. I was soon after sent for by the bishop; but I did not much like my errand. When I arrived, the bishop accosted me in a very abrupt manner. 'Well, Berridge, they tell me you go about preaching out of your own parish. Did I insti-

tute you to the livings of A—y, or E—n, or P—n?' 'No, my lord,' said I; 'neither do I claim any of these livings. The clergymen enjoy them undisturbed by me.' 'Well, but you go and preach there, which you have no right to do.' 'It is true, my lord, I was one day at E—n, and there were a few poor people assembled together, and I admonished them to repent of their sins, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls; and I remember seeing five or six clergymen that day, my lord, all out of their own parishes upon E—n bowling-green.'—'Oh!' said his lordship; 'I tell you you have no right to preach out of your own parish; and if you do not desist from it, you will very likely be sent to Huntingdon gaol.'—'As to that, my lord,' said I, 'I have no greater liking to Huntingdon gaol than other people; but I had rather go thither with a good conscience, than live at my liberty without one.'—Here his lordship looked very hard at me, and very gravely assured me 'that I was beside myself, and that in a few months' time I should either be better or worse.'—'Then,' said I, 'my lord, you may make yourself quite happy in this business; for if I should be better, you suppose I shall desist from this practice of my own accord; and if worse, you need not send me to Huntingdon gaol, as I shall be provided with accommodation in Bedlam.'—His lordship now changed his mode of attack. Instead of threatening he began to entreat. 'Berridge,' said he, 'you know I have been your friend, and I wish to be so still. I am continually teazed with the complaints of the clergymen around you. Only assure me you will keep to your own parish; you may do as you please there. I have but little time to live; do not bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.'—At this instant, two gentlemen were announced, who desired to speak with his

lordship. 'Berridge,' said he, 'go to your inn, and come again at such an hour, and dine with me.'—I went, and on entering a private room, fell immediately upon my knees. I could bear threatening, but knew not how to withstand entreaty, especially the entreaty of a respectable old man. At the time appointed I returned. At dinner I was treated with great respect. The two gentlemen also dined with us, and I found they had been informed who I was, as they sometimes cast their eyes towards me, in some such manner as one would glance at a monster. After dinner his lordship took me into the garden. 'Well, Berridge,' said he, 'have you considered my request?'—'I have, my lord, and have been upon my knees concerning it.'—'Well,' 'and will you promise me that you will preach no more out of your own parish?' 'It would afford me great pleasure,' said I, 'to comply with your lordship's request if I could do it with a good conscience. I am satisfied the Lord has blessed my labours of this kind, and I dare not desist.'—'A good conscience!' said his lordship; 'do you not know that it is contrary to the canons of the church?'—'There is one canon, my lord, which says, 'Go preach the gospel to every creature.'——'But why should you wish to interfere with the charge of other men? One man cannot preach the gospel to all the world.'—'If they would preach the gospel themselves,' said I, 'there would be no need for my preaching it to their people; but as they do not I cannot desist.'—His lordship then parted from me in some displeasure. I took no measures for my own preservation; but divine providence worked for me in a way I never expected."

"When I was at Clare Hall, I was particularly acquainted with a certain Fellow of that College and we were both on terms of intimacy with Mr Pitt, the late

Lord Chatham, who was at that time also at the University. This Fellow of Clare Hall, when I began to preach the Gospel, became my enemy and did me some injury. At length, however, when he heard that I was likely to come into trouble and be turned out of my living at Everton, his heart relented. He began to think within himself, 'We shall ruin this poor fellow among us.' This was just about the time I was sent for by the bishop. Of his own accord he writes a letter to Mr Pitt, saying nothing about my Methodism, but to this effect:—'Our old friend Berridge has got a living in Bedfordshire, and I am told there is one of his neighbours who gives him a great deal of trouble, and has accused him to the bishop, and it is said, will turn him out of his living. I wish you would contrive to stop his proceedings.' Mr Pitt was then a young man and not desiring to apply himself to the bishop, spoke to a certain nobleman about it to whom the bishop was indebted for his promotion. This nobleman made it his business, within a few days to see the bishop, who was then in London. 'My lord,' he said, 'I am informed you have a very honest fellow named Berridge in your diocese, and that he has been ill-treated by a litigious neighbour, who I hear has accused him to your lordship, and wishes to turn him out of his living. You would oblige me, if you would take no notice of this person, and not suffer the honest person to be interrupted.' The bishop was astonished, and could not imagine in what manner things could have thus got round."

Berridge died in a good old age on January 22nd, 1793. Old Henry Venn, of Yelling, his son John Venn and Charles Simeon, were among the few neighbours with whom the good old Vicar of Everton felt entire sympathy.

There was a strange vein of quaintness in his mental

constitution, which seemed to crop out on every occasion. He was continually saying odd things, and employing odd illustrations to convey his meaning, and could not help putting things in a ludicrous way. It was in vain his friends warned him of his besetting sin. The old evangelist acknowledged his infirmity, and pleaded that he "was born with a fool's cap on, and that a fool's cap was not so easily put off as a night cap. Odd things break from me as abruptly as croaking from a raven." Quaintly he thought, and quaintly he spoke, and so he preached and wrote,—quaint he lived and quaint he died. Berridge writes, "Nature lost her legs in Paradise, and has not found them since; nor has she any will to come to Jesus. The way is steep and narrow, full of self-denials, crowded up with stumbling-blocks; she cannot like it; and when she does come, it is with huge complaining. Moses is obliged to flog her tightly, and make her heart ache, before she casts a weeping look at Jesus. Once she doated on this Jewish lawgiver, was fairly wedded to him, and sought to please him by her works, and he seemed a kindly husband; but now he grows so grim a tyrant, there is no leaving him."

Berridge was a bachelor. He thus writes to Lady Huntingdon about the marriage of ministers on March 23, 1770, "Before I parted with honest G., I cautioned him much about petticoat snares. He has burnt his wings already. Sure he will not imitate a foolish gnat, and hover again about the candle? If he should fall into a sleeping lap, like Samson, he will soon need a flannel night cap, and a rusty chain to keep him down, like a chained bible to the reading desk. No trap so mischievous to the field preacher as wedlock; it is laid for him at every hedge-corner. Matrimony has quite maimed poor Charles

(Wesley), and might have spoiled John (Wesley) and George (Whitfield) if a wise Master had not graciously sent them a brace of ferrets. Dear George has now got his liberty again; and he will escape well if he be not caught by another tenter-hook. Eight or nine years ago, having been grievously tormented with house-keeping, I truly had thought of looking out for a Jezebel myself. But it seemed highly needful to ask advice of the Lord. So, kneeling down on my knees before a table, with a bible between my hands, I besought the Lord to give me a direction." We may add that Jeremiah xvi. 2 settled the question to Berridge's satisfaction, in the negative.

He was a man of singular kindness and self-denial. Houses and barns were rented for preaching, lay-preachers maintained in all directions, and his own travelling expenses provided by himself. Whenever he preached in a cottage, he always left half-a-crown for the use of it; and during his itinerancy he actually spent £500 in this way alone. His whole income, both private and professional, was annually spent in doing good, and even his family plate was sold to buy clothes for itinerant preachers. As to his own habits, they were simple in the extreme. When the Hon. and Rev. W. Shirley stopped at Everton to preach during Berridge's absence from home, he wrote to him:—"You must eat what is set before you, and be thankful. I get hot victuals but once a week for myself, viz. on Saturday; but because you are an honourable man I have ordered two hot joints to be got each week for you. Use what I have just as your own. I make no feasts, but save all I can. I have never yet been worth a groat at the year's end, nor desire it." In another letter he says, "I fear my weekly circuits would not suit a London or Bath divine. Long rides and miry roads, in sharp

weather! Cold houses to sit in, with very moderate fuel, and three or four children roaring or rocking about you! Coarse food and meagre liquor! Lumpy beds to lie on and too short for the feet, with stiff blankets like boards for a covering! Rise at five in the morning to preach; at seven, breakfast on poor tea; at eight, mount a horse with boots never cleaned, and then ride home, praising God for all mercies!"

When Henry Owen paid a visit to Berridge in 1792 he found him very old and decaying; sight very dim, his ears can scarcely hear, but a joy in his countenance and with a lively hope looking for the day of his dissolution. He expressed himself as *alone*, unable to read or hear, or do anything. But he said, 'Lord if I have thy presence and love, *that* sufficeth.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

Henry Venn of Huddersfield and Yelling.

Henry Venn was born at Barnes in Surrey in 1724. He was the descendant of a long line of clergymen, reaching downwards in unbroken succession from the time of the Reformation. Rev. J. C. Ryle says, "At present the name of Venn has appeared for seven generations in the clergy list of the Church of England."

Henry Venn became Curate of Clapham in 1754, where he resided five years. In 1759 he was appointed Vicar of Huddersfield, where he laboured with wonderful success for twelve years, after which weakness and indications of consumption obliged him to give up his heavy work there for the quiet retirement of the country village of Yelling in Huntingdonshire, which in 1870 had a population of some four hundred souls. His church at Huddersfield was so crowded that numbers came who could not gain admission. Persons flocked thither from distant hamlets, inquiring what they must do to be saved. On Sunday he would often address the congregation from the desk, briefly explaining the psalms and the lessons, and frequently begin the service with a solemn and impressive address. His whole soul was engaged in preaching; and as at this time he only used short notes in the pulpit, ample room was left to indulge the feelings of com-

passion, tenderness and love, with which his heart overflowed towards his people. In the week he regularly visited the different hamlets in his extensive parish; and collecting some of the inhabitants at a private house, addressed them with kindness and earnestness which moved every heart. From a letter written in 1762 we learn that the Vicar of Huddersfield generally preached eight or ten sermons in the week in distant parts of the parish, when many came to hear who would not come to church. It also mentions that his outdoor preaching was found specially useful. Canon Ryle says, "The immediate effects produced by Henry Venn's preaching appear to have been singularly deep, powerful, and permanent."

Henry Venn's grandson visited Huddersfield in 1824, fifty-three years after his honoured grandfather had left the place. He called upon several old people who heard and valued Mr Venn's preaching. Among them was Mr Brook of Longwood, who said, "The people used to go from Longwood in droves to Huddersfield Church, three miles off. Some of his hearers came out of church together, whose ways home were in this direction; and they used to stop at the Fir's End, about a mile off, and talk over for some time what they had heard, before they separated to go to their homes. That place has been to me like a little heaven below! I never heard a minister like him. He was most powerful in unfolding the terrors of the law; when doing so, he had a stern look that would make you tremble. Then he would turn off to the offers of grace, and begin to smile, and go on entreating till his eyes filled with tears."

Another old man of 82 said of his preaching "Nobody could help being affected; the most wicked and ill-conditioned men went to hear him, and fell like slacked

lime in a moment, even though they were not converted. I could have heard him preach all the night through."

Another person of eighty-five years old said, Mr Venn would say to the lads he catechized, "Read your bibles, dear lads, and press forward, and you cannot miss heaven."

Another says, "When Mr Venn got warm with his subject, he looked as if he would jump out of his pulpit. He made many weep. When he came up to the church, he used to go round the churchyard and drive us all in before him." He was on terms of intimate friendship with Wesley, Whitfield, Grimshaw and Fletcher.

There is an interesting letter written by Venn to Lady Huntingdon about the year 1768 in which he boldly supports Whitfield in his out-of-doors preaching, and as it illustrates the characters of both the good men we must give it room here. It was written on the occasion of Whitfield preaching on a tombstone in the churchyard of Cheltenham Parish Church, after permission had been refused to preach in the church. Venn writes, "To give your ladyship any just description of what our eyes have witnessed and our hearts have felt the last few days at Cheltenham, exceeds my feeble powers. My inmost soul is penetrated with an overwhelming sense of the power and presence of Jehovah, who has visited us with an effusion of His Spirit in a very eminent manner. There was a visible appearance of much soul-concern among the crowd that filled every part of the burial-ground. Many were overcome with fainting; others sobbed deeply, some wept silently; and a solemn concern appeared on the countenance of almost the whole assembly. But when he pressed the injunction of the text (Isa. lv. 1), on the unconverted and ungodly,

his words seemed to act like a sword, and many burst out into piercing cries. At this juncture Mr Whitfield made an awful pause of a few seconds, and wept himself. During this interval Mr Madan and myself stood up and requested the people as much as possible to restrain themselves from making a noise. Oh! with what eloquence, what energy, what melting tenderness did Mr Whitfield beseech sinners to be reconciled to God, to come to him for life everlasting, and to rest their weary souls on Christ the Saviour! When the sermon was ended the people seemed chained to the ground."

He removed to Yelling in 1771. His life here was singularly quiet and uneventful. The change from Huddersfield apparently added some twenty-six years to his life, for on his removal his health and strength gradually returned. He writes to a Huddersfield friend, "You tell me you have no idea how we get on. Take the following sketch. I am up one of the first in the house, soon after five o'clock; and when prayer and reading the blessed Word is done, my daughters make their appearance, and I teach them till Mrs Venn comes down at half-past eight. Then family prayer begins, which is often very sweet, as my servants are all, I believe, born of God. The children begin to sing prettily; and our praises, I trust, are heard on high. From breakfast we are all employed till we ride out, in fine weather, two hours for health, and after dinner employed again. At six I have always one hour for solemn meditation and walking in my garden till seven. We have then sometimes twenty, and sometimes more, of the people, to whom I expound God's Word. Several appear much affected; sometimes Jesus stands in the midst and says, 'Peace be unto you!' Our devotions end at eight, we

sup and go to rest at ten. On Sundays I am still enabled to speak six hours, at three different times, to my own great surprise: Oh! the goodness of God is raising me up!" Though he seldom came before the public as he did in his Huddersfield days, he still found many ways of doing his Master's work, and proclaiming the gospel which he loved. The value of his preaching was soon discovered, even in his secluded neighbourhood, and he had the comfort of seeing fruit of his ministry in Huntingdonshire, as real, if not so abundant, as in Yorkshire. Occasionally he preached out of his own parish, though not so often perhaps as his friend and neighbour Berridge could have wished. Sometimes he preached in London in the pulpit of Surrey Chapel, so late as 1786.

About six months before his death he finally left Yelling, and settled at Clapham, near his son—who was then rector of that well-known London suburb. He died on the 24th of June, 1797, at the age of seventy-three.

CHAPTER XIX.

State of the Establishment.

We have now reviewed the principal religious influences which at earlier periods probably touched the inhabitants of Bluntisham and its neighbourhood. When we consider the large area from which was drawn the congregation assembling at the Meeting-house at Bluntisham we can the more readily believe that each of the religious forces we have had in review had its influence in preparing the people for the movement led by Mr Coxe Feary, when he and his friends founded the society and built the Meeting-house, which for one hundred years has been a centre of light in Huntingdonshire.

At the time of this movement in 1784 religion in the Established Church was at a very low ebb. Pluralists, frequently non-resident, provided for their parishes at the cheapest rate they could command. The clergy were often appointed from political or social or family considerations, quite apart from the question of the hold they had on religious truth; many had scarcely a perception of the nature of spiritual religion, much less any experience in themselves of its power to save. Consequently they were unable to minister to their people in spiritual things. and some honestly acknowledged this inability. In many districts there was spiritual deadness—sometimes a dark-

ness like heathendom—no light to guide the soul heavenward—no sympathy with souls struggling with doubt and fear, or striving to enter into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Some of the clergy, beneficed and otherwise, disgraced their calling by excessive drinking. Immersed in worldliness to the complete absorption of their time in pleasure, they neglected even their ordinary clerical duties. Some were curiously unable to comprehend the spiritual and religious difficulties of their people. A question on these matters perplexed them, and at a remark on these topics they were nonplussed. It is difficult now to picture the religious condition of England at the time of which we speak, and to realise how large was the number of churches in which there was no gospel teaching. This being the case, it is not to be wondered at that people in whose hearts the Spirit of God was moving, and who were not unmindful of the divine light, grew dissatisfied with the quality and extent of the preaching within the Church of England. In many places they either left the parish church altogether or only attended in part, driving off to a gospel preacher in some church, meeting-house, cottage, gentleman's kitchen or farm-house, wherever an opportunity existed. They would often travel many miles for the spiritual food of which they felt in need, sometimes going a distance of twenty and even thirty miles on the Sunday, not unfrequently travelling these distances on foot. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Miss Hannah More thus describes the state of the Established Church in her own neighbourhood.

Dating from Cowslip Green in 1789, Miss More writing to Mrs Kennicott, says,—"We have in this neighbourhood thirteen adjoining parishes, without so much as even a

resident *curate*." And in a letter to Mrs Carter, Miss More writes, "Our own villages are in Pagan darkness, and upon many of them scarcely a ray of Christianity has shone. I speak from the most minute and diligent examination. In one particular spot, for instance, there are six large parishes, without so much as a resident curate. Three commonly gifted curates cannot serve eight churches."

In another letter to Mrs Kennicott Miss More writes, "I have fixed on the central parish of six large ones, which have not so much as a regular *curate*, for the principal scene of my operations. I have hired an old Vicarage house which has had no inhabitant these hundred years, and in this I propose to place some pious and knowing people to instruct the poor, who are more vicious and ignorant than I could have conceived possible in a country which calls itself Christian. The Vicar who lives a long way off, is repairing the house for me, and as he is but ninety-four years old, he insists on my taking a lease, and is as vigorous about the rent as if I were taking it for an assembly-room." In a letter to Mr Wilberforce dated 1789 from the George Hotel, Cheddar, Miss More writes, "The Vicarage of Cheddar is in the gift of the Dean of Wells; the value nearly fifty pounds per annum. The incumbent is a Mr R——, who has something to do, but I cannot here find out what, in the University of Oxford, where he resides. The curate lives at Wells, twelve miles distant. They have only service once a week, and there is scarcely an instance of a poor person being visited, or prayed with. The living of Axbridge belongs to the Prebendary of Wiveliscombe, in the cathedral of Wells. The annual value is about fifty pounds. The incumbent is about sixty years of age. The Prebend to which this Rectory belongs

is in the gift of the Bishop of Bath and Wells. Mr G. is intoxicated about six times a week, and very frequently is prevented from preaching by two black eyes, honestly earned by fighting."

For placing a school at Wedmore, Hannah More was ultimately prosecuted in the Ecclesiastical Court. Some of the depositions went to prove as an offence, that Miss More's schoolmaster "had been heard to pray extempore in private, and that he was a Calvinist." "The church," says Miss More, "was in danger." (See her letter to Mr Wilberforce.)

"Although possessed of vast revenues and a monopoly of power, the Established Church had almost utterly neglected to perform its duty in respect to the religious education of the people."

Chief Justice Blackstone, who made a point at this time (1767) of hearing the most celebrated preachers in London, stated that in all his visits to the churches he did not hear a sermon that had more Christianity in it than a speech of Cicero, and that it would have been impossible for him to tell whether the preacher was a Mahommedan or a Christian. Scattered throughout England were a few "Methodist" clergy, the Founders of the Evangelical party in the Established Church, who laboured incessantly for the advancement of religion; but they were outnumbered by thousands and frowned upon by all who were in authority.

The pillar of fire and cloud of smoke which had guided our Bluntisham friends to seek the spiritual sustenance they needed at the hands of a gospel preacher in a distant church, soon stood over their native village, and they found there the means of grace.

The Congregational form of worship is the simplest pos-

sible; it was adopted by the primitive church when it met in the upper room. It is the expression of the first need of the two or three who desire to meet the Lord. And so such have continued to do ever since. When at Bluntisham they first met in a small room and their little band increased, they changed to a larger room. Their band still increasing they met in a barn. Their circle widening they built a meeting-house—still widening, they enlarged their meeting-house. What less could they do? And what more was necessary? Then they made their own internal arrangements—their rules of procedure and of worship. And so led by their common sense, actuated and controlled by the spirit of Christ, they quietly carried on their work.

People ~~turn~~ up their noses at our old meeting-houses, but forget the usual circumstances under which they were built: Poverty—exacting strict economy—and a Puritan sense of the incongruity of ornament. In a building erected for the exercise of spiritual worship, nothing they thought should be introduced which could distract attention either by its ugliness or its beauty. Space, light, air, protection from weather, no bar to the sight of the minister, or to the sound of his voice. These were the essentials, and beyond these they had for the most part no money to carry them, nor desire to go. In those simple days neither debts nor begging were so congenial nor respectable as they are now.

CHAPTER XX.

Rise of the Church at Bluntisham.

In telling the story of the forming of the church, and building the Meeting-house at Bluntisham, we have the advantage of the "Memoirs of Mr Coxe Feary," written by his friend Mr John Audley of Cambridge in 1823. In the introduction we are told—and this is quoted from Mr Coxe Feary—"There were in the parish of Bluntisham, a few families of Dissenters of the people called Quakers, at so early a period as about the year 1657. They had a place for public worship, but the cause declined; they sold their place, and built another in the next village, Earith. In the last century there were three or four families of the Baptist persuasion at Bluntisham, who had occasional preaching at their houses; but without increasing the number of Dissenters. The whole village, therefore, except the few families mentioned above, remained strict church people till the year 1784, when the following circumstances entirely changed the religious complexion of the people."

At the time of which we are writing the Rev. John Jacob Oakes was Vicar of Bluntisham. That he was not one of the "Gospel preachers," we draw from several facts stated in the narrative given by Coxe Feary of the religious movements of the time, and from the need of

evangelical teaching, felt by the church people of Bluntisham sufficiently to induce them to travel on Sunday to Yelling that they might attend the services of the Rev. Henry Venn.

Mr Coxe Feary has narrated the events of this time in a series of memoranda in the records of the church of which he became the first pastor, and we cannot do better than quote his words: they are written in the third person, in the year 1784.

"His having now given up attendance at his own parish church, and going twelve miles—the distance Yelling is from Bluntisham—every sabbath to worship, excited great attention among his neighbours, who frequently enquired into the reason of his conduct. This gave him a favourable opportunity of talking to them about the salvation of their souls, and of the importance and great advantage of evangelical preaching. Yea, such was the love and tender compassion he felt for poor perishing sinners, that he could not refrain from testifying to them, 'Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' Many in the village, like the noble Bereans, 'received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so.' So desirous were the people of religious instruction, that in the course of the summer a number of his friends and neighbours would frequently go to Yelling with him, to hear Mr Venn. Moreover such was the religious concern excited in the neighbourhood by his example and religious conversation, that it might be truly said, 'Lift up your eyes, and look upon the fields, for they are white already to harvest.'"

We can imagine the company of travellers on their Sabbath-day's journey to Yelling; the way would lead them through St Ives, across the river Ouse, by the ancient

bridge, and along the broad high road. They would cross the Roman "Via Devana" leading from Cambridge to Godmanchester, and another Roman Road—the "Ermine Street," near Kisby's Hut. We know their topics of conversation.

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name." When the two friends were walking to Emmaus that memorable evening, an unknown companion walked and talked by their side. Was he not, though unseen, accompanying the friends to Yelling and opening their eyes?

In the autumn of the same year Mr Feary purchased Whitfield's sermons and the same evening read one of them, no doubt at his own house, to his shepherd labourers and his intimate and bosom friend, Mr Asplan, who were much delighted. The text was 'What think ye of Christ?' The next evening, without his knowing or expecting any such thing, a number of poor people came with Mr John Kent, a gentleman of the village, to hear him read a sermon. A circumstance so unexpected much embarrassed him. The idea of reading before so many people, and the shame of being counted a methodist preacher, led him to decline reading; but such was their desire to hear, that they declared they would not depart until he had read a sermon to them. Accordingly, with no little confusion he repeated the same sermon he had read the night before; and such was the satisfaction received, by the blessing of God upon the sermon, that it laid the foundation of the present church and congregation. Such events as these shew that God's thoughts are not our thoughts. One of the poor women very much wished him

to read a sermon at her house the next evening. He consented on condition that she would not make it known; but, notwithstanding the caution taken to conceal it, when he went in the evening the house was filled; and it was a most interesting sight to behold the profound attention and deep seriousness, with which the poor people received the glad tidings of salvation from the reading of that sermon. He continued reading to the people during the winter, in the same cottage, one of the almshouses at the south end of the village, belonging to Thomas Harrison. And such was the awakening in the place, that the people were constantly enquiring "What they must do to be saved?" In the spring of 1785, as the house could not contain the people, they removed into the next house, which was larger. Here for the first time Mr Feary found courage to pray with the people after the sermon. They being unaccustomed to anything of the kind, it produced such a feeling of affection and surprise, that, like the people at Lystra, with Paul and Barnabas, they would have done sacrifice. The congregation still increasing, they opened a larger house in the village. All this while they had no regular time for worship, but sometimes met two, three or four evenings in the course of the week. Being still a constant attendant at Mr Venn's church on the Lord's day, he acquainted him with what was going on. Mr Venn encouraged him, pressed him to keep on, saying that "he believed God had a great work to do at Bluntisham;" and that "in the course of the summer he would come over and help them."

At this time Mr Feary was favoured with the friendship of two other clergymen—Mr Simeon, of Cambridge, one of the leaders of the "Clapham Sect," and a Trustee for the livings purchased by the Evangelical Trust Fund,—

and Mr Brock the minister of the villages of Stukely and Offord. Mr Audley says that "Mr Simeon on one occasion during the summer preached a sermon in Mr Feary's house, the service commencing at 5 o'clock in the morning. The room was crowded to excess, and tradition says many collected at the back of the house, so that Mr Simeon, standing outside near a pump which still remains, addressed his hearers through open door and window." Mr Audley adds, "This was a season long remembered with peculiar pleasure, on account of the evident tokens by which God gave testimony to the word of His grace."

Mr Venn, agreeably to his promise, paid a visit to Bluntisham during that summer, and for his accommodation Mr John Kent opened his barn, in which Mr Venn preached to a large and deeply attentive congregation. The scene was affecting, and Mr Venn declared that he never but once in all his life enjoyed such a season of refreshment from the presence of the Lord. From this time Mr Kent insisted upon the people accepting the use of the barn as often as they pleased. They thankfully embraced the offer, opened a small subscription, and fitted it up for their use. This barn stood a little back from the road on the opposite side to the site of the present chapel, and a few yards further up the road, but was taken down some years ago, and a new one built on the spot. The premises are now owned by Mr John Beldam.

Mr Feary continues, "This was a new trial to their friend C. Feary, as it looked so much like a separation from the Establishment, and of his being a Dissenting Minister; to neither of which he at that time could be reconciled. But though this was unpleasant to his feelings, he continued meeting the people and reading

sermons, in order to keep them together, hoping to have an opportunity of procuring a Curate to preach the gospel in the church. For this purpose he mentioned the matter to the Rev. Mr Simeon, who was very desirous to accomplish such an object, and applied to Mr Houseman, a serious clergyman, who engaged to come, if Mr Oakes, the rector, consented; and the people proposed a subscription towards his salary. But the proposals were rejected." Mr Feary next invited Mr Simeon to favour the people at Bluntisham with another sermon, the service he held before in Mr Feary's house having been attended with such beneficial effects. Mr Simeon after consulting with one of his seniors thought proper to decline Mr Feary's request. The refusal of Mr Simeon to come any more amongst them added to that of the rector to receive an evangelical clergyman as his curate, perplexed Mr Feary and his friends. "And as they did not know what to do on the Lord's day, Coxe Feary proposed to meet them in the morning before he went to Yelling, and in the evening on his return, and pray with them and read a sermon to them. And so anxious were the people to hear the word of God, that multitudes would be waiting on the road for his coming home. They continued this practice for some time, until the congregation became very large, not fewer than between three and four hundred. Under these encouraging circumstances, Mr Venn advised him to stop at home the whole of the Sabbath which he did. Having finished all Mr Whitfield's and Mr Hervey's sermons, he was under the necessity of making an effort at expounding a chapter out of the sacred Scriptures. This he did for some months: after which he took a single passage, and endeavoured to preach from it, which proving acceptable,

he was encouraged to go on, 'for the hand of the Lord was with him, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord'." And so the Gospel was preached and services were held regularly in the barn. There is a delightful appropriateness in these simple village meetings, under the home-like thatch, so cool in summer, so warm in winter. One imagines the country folk greeting one another outside the barn as they gather for the service, and as they return comparing impressions of what they had heard, and speaking together of the good Lord who had Himself met them. Mr Audley says, "The state of things at Bluntisham being known by that excellent man, the Rev. Joseph Saunders, pastor of the Independent Church in Cambridge, he went over and preached in the barn." Of this the following memorial is preserved: "Thursday, July 25th, 1786, Mr Saunders of Cambridge preached from these words of Paul, Phil. i. 6, 'Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ.' There was a very crowded audience, and I never saw a more attentive congregation, for the whole appeared much affected. The word distilled as the silent dew upon the people, who were evidently refreshed from the presence of the Lord. I believe it to be a season which will never be forgotten. As God had blessed his labours of love to a number of immortal souls, they began to feel a desire to walk together in the order and fellowship of the gospel. After seriously examining the principles of Dissent, and having frequent meetings for prayer for a divine blessing upon their undertaking, they applied to Mr Saunders, pastor of the Independent Church at Cambridge, for advice relative to their forming themselves into a Christian church, and the following letter was received from him."

"CAMBRIDGE, 16*th Nov.* 1786.

"DEAR SIR,

"Too long your letter has lain by me unnoticed; but almost constant and unexpected interruptions have been the cause. My soul magnifies the Lord for the great things he has done for you, and by you, and among you already. Also for now laying it upon your hearts, publicly to give up yourselves to the Lord your God, and to one another, that so you may honour him, edify each other, and bear up the name of your glorious Redeemer in the midst of this sinful world. May the shout of a King be among you on the solemn day you speak of. And who can tell what may be its pleasing and glorious effects on others, who may stand by, and hear what God has done for your souls; whose hearts he has touched and animated to make a public surrender of yourselves to the Lord, and to each other, to walk together in all gospel ordinances? By all means have your day of prayer publicly, as at other times, and let all the people be present that desire it, unless you apprehend this would discourage and keep back any from speaking, who would do it at a private meeting. But in case you fear any present who might laugh, or restrain any from speaking freely of God's gracious dealings with them, then meet in a more private manner. My prayers are for you, my heart is with you; and with the kindest respects to you all, I rest, your affectionate brother in Christ,

J. SAUNDERS."

To Mr Coxe Feary, Bluntisham.

Mr Feary continues, "After mature deliberation upon the subject, it was agreed to have the solemn transactions of the day public, and openly to acknowledge Him who died upon the cross to save the chief of sinners."

"On Dec. 28th, 1786, a public meeting was held in the barn, when after singing and prayer, and in the presence of a numerous congregation, Coxe Feary, with twenty-five

of his Christian friends, related severally the Lord's gracious dealings with them, joining together in hand and heart, giving up themselves to the Lord and to one another, by the will of God, to walk together in the fellowship of the gospel, and to support the interest of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world, as King upon His holy hill of Zion."

"Their meeting was solemn, the sight was truly affecting, and many were constrained to say that they enjoyed a season of refreshment from the presence of the Lord. It was agreed upon that meetings for prayer, and for transacting the concerns of the church, should be held in the week before their Lord's-supper days."

Of the twenty-six persons who, including Mr Feary, thus united themselves together in Christian fellowship, thirteen were men and thirteen were women. They were

1. Coxe Feary, of Bluntisham, Farmer, who was afterwards chosen Pastor of the church.
2. James Seekings, of Colne, Labouring man.
3. Wm. Whittlesey, of the parish of Somersham, Bricklayer.
4. Nathaniel Gifford, of the parish of Over, Cambridgeshire, Farmer.
5. John Hall, of Woodhurst. Died in the year 1812.
6. John Thang, of Somersham Fen.
7. Gabriel Sallis, who came out of Gloucestershire, and settled at Bluntisham.
8. Thomas Shanks, of the parish of Colne, who died 3rd July, 1788, and was the first buried in the burial ground.
9. John Elmour, of Bluntisham, Dairy-man, Died 7th or 8th Jan. 1811.
10. William Asplan, of Bluntisham, Farmer, chosen to the office of Deacon, 1787.
11. Peter Barlow, of Somersham, Farmer.

12. Thomas Harrison, of Bluntisham, Bricklayer. Died Mar. 19th, 1803.

13. Elizabeth White, of Bluntisham, was called by divine grace under a sermon preached at Bluntisham by Mr Simeon of King's College, Cambridge. Died 1815.

14. Ann Fordham (afterwards Mrs Gregory), of Bluntisham, was brought to an experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ when very young.

15. Dinah, the Wife of John Kimpton, of Somersham, Labourer.

16. Ann Richardson, the Widow of Jos. Richardson, of Bluntisham; she died suddenly, Sept. 6th, 1802.

17. Elizabeth, the Daughter of Thos. Christmas, of Somersham, Labourer.

18. Hannah, the Widow of John Greene, of Somersham, Farmer, Died May, 1819.

19. Elizabeth, the Daughter of Wm. Royston, of the parish of Woodhurst, Farmer.

20. Sarah, the Widow of Wm. Holiday, of Bluntisham, Carpenter, died 25th Oct. 1792, remarkably happy in the Lord.

21. Martha, the Wife of John Burton, of Bluntisham, Labourer.

22. Mary, the Wife of John Howard of Colne, Labourer.

23. Mary Gowler, a poor Woman. Died April, 1818.

24. Susannah, the Wife of Robt. French, of Woodhurst.

25. John Kimpton, of Somersham.

26. Elizabeth Kimmons, the Wife of Thomas Kimmons, of Somersham, Butcher.

These persons deserve honour as the Founders of the church at Bluntisham. Their names are also entered in another place in the church book appended to the Confession of Faith which we give in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXI.

Profession of Faith and Lists of Early Church Members.

The twenty-six members who first united themselves together to form the church were soon joined by others.

"At the next church meeting, Jan. 27th, 1787, seven more members were admitted and related the Lord's dealings with them in bringing them out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

27. Thomas Wilson, of Witton, Hunts. Farmer. Died Sept. 1797.

28. Edward Parker, of Colne, Smith. Died Dec. 1814.

29. Joseph Johnson, Over, Labourer.

30. Mary, the Wife of Thos. Harrison, of Bluntisham, Bricklayer. After an honourable profession of Christ for fifteen years died in the Lord, Jan. 1st, 1802.

31. Elizabeth, the Widow of Elias Carter, of Bluntisham. A good old woman, died full of faith Jan. 1st, 1802. Her last words were, "Not a wave of trouble rolls across my peaceful breast."

32. John Clark, of Over, Cambridgeshire, a youth.

33. Thos. Philip, of Somersham, Collar-maker."

"March the 9th. At the church-meeting, after prayer and singing, the following persons, in order to give up themselves to the Lord and to the church by the will

of God, after relating the Lord's dealing with them, were admitted, viz.

34. William Barley, of Earith, Miller and Baker, was chosen to the office of Deacon in the same year.

35. Thomas Midcalf, of Holywell, Dairy-man.

36. Robt. Leeds, of Colne, Farmer, chosen one of the Deacons the same year. Died on the 17th July, 1816, after a long affliction, which he bore with great patience and submission to the will of God. He had lost his sight some years before his death, but was never heard to complain.

37. Poulter Margest, of Woodhurst, Farmer.

38. Elizabeth, the Wife of Thos. Shanks, of Colne, Labourer. Died 9th June, 1809.

39. Hannah, the Widow of Wm. Harrison, of Bluntisham, Bricklayer. Departed this life on the 22nd Nov. 1800, leaving behind her five fatherless and motherless children who have all been brought up according to his word, where it is said "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in Me."

40. Mary, the Wife of Wm. Whittlesey, of Bluntisham, Labourer. After faithfully serving the Congregation for twenty-four years, in sweeping the Meeting-house, opening the doors etc., she changed a state of sin and affliction, for an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away. Oct. 16th, 1810.

41. Mary Pappee, servant of Mrs Potto's, of Earith, admitted May 9th, 1787.

42. Elizabeth Woods, of Needingworth, admitted July 2nd, 1787.

43. William Carter, of Colne, Labourer, admitted July 2nd, 1787. Chosen to the office of Deacon the same year.

44. Ann Day, of Colne, Widow, admitted July 2nd, 1787. She died after a long affliction, which she bore with Christian patience in hopes of eternal life, April 23rd, 1808.

45. Cooper Adder, of Colne, Labourer, admitted July 2nd, 1787.

46. Elizabeth Asplan, of Bluntisham, admitted Sept. 16th, 1787.

47. Ann Wood, of Needingworth, admitted Sept. 16th, 1787.

48. Elizabeth Feary, of Bluntisham, admitted Sept. 16th, 1787.

49. Thomas Ratford, admitted Nov. 15th, 1787.

50. William Lambert, of Earith, Smith, admitted Nov. 15th, 1787.

51. Elizabeth Benton, admitted Nov. 15th, 1787.

52. Henry Rose, of Colne, Shepherd, admitted, Jan. 10th, 1788.

53. James Blake, Colne, Weaver, admitted Feb. 9th, 1788.

54. William Watson, Somersham, admitted Feb. 9th, 1788.

55. Ann, the Wife of John Wallice, of Woodhurst, Labourer, admitted April 10th, 1788.

56. Mary Cheer, of Colne, admitted April 10th, 1788."

It appears that four of the members of the church were chosen Deacons in the year 1787: they were,

William Asplan, Farmer, of Bluntisham.
William Barley, Miller and Farmer, of Earith.
Robert Leeds, Farmer, of Colne.
William Carter, Labourer, of Colne.

The following is copied from the Church book, entered at the head of the list of members, and entitled:—

"A form of Covenant held by the church of Christ at Bluntisham, planted 28th day of December 1786."

"We who are by nature children of wrath even as others have heretofore been in a state of more than Egyptian darkness, even such darkness as may be felt, and were strangers

to the covenant of promise, and without God in the world; but God who is rich in mercy for his great love, wherewith he loved us in Christ before the foundation of the world, has by a wonderful interposition of Divine Providence, even, in such a way and manner as constrains us to confess and say, 'it is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes.' Being therefore brought through Grace and everlasting Love to look unto him on whom our help is stayed. Under a due sense of God's gracious dealings towards us and our great obligations to God, we are firmly persuaded in our own minds that it is our duty as well as privilege in mutual consent and agreement with each other to support the cause and interest of our great and glorious Redeemer, and knowing that for so great and important a work, it requires that we should be united together in heart and affection, or as the Scriptures express it, 'Of one heart and of one soul; being knit together in love.' In order thereto we do hereby publicly, and without reserve (in the strength of the Lord) resign and give up ourselves wholly to Christ, the complete Saviour of his people, and to one another, to walk together in church fellowship, and communion, promising in his strength to support the cause and interest of our Redeemer's Kingdom."

"I. It appears according to the rule given in the New Testament, that those that propose themselves to be members of a church could not be admitted as such until a full and satisfactory proof be given of a work of grace on their souls. —It is said that when Saul assayed to join himself to the Disciples, they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a Disciple until it was declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him; and how he had preached the gospel in his name. Agreeable to which we propose to admit none to the Lord's table, but such as we believe have experienced a work of grace upon their souls, and shall be approved of by the church, and if approved of to be admitted."

"II. As a church of Christ we desire through grace not to countenance the works of darkness such as Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Murder, Drunkenness and such like. And not to frequent public places of amusement such as Horse-racing, Playhouses, Dancing, Cardplaying, Gaming, nor to frequent Ale-houses, unless lawfully engaged, but according to that scripture, 'come out from amongst them, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of Darkness, but reprove them. But on the other hand to take the written word of God our Saviour and seek each other's edification, the increase of Christ's Kingdom, and the good of mankind."

"III. That such steps be taken as make for love, peace, and order, viz. not to absent ourselves from the public worship of God unless lawfully engaged, according to that scripture, 'forsake not the assembling of yourselves together,' but to abide by and meet with each other at all times, as well in adversity as prosperity, and not to withdraw on slight occasions nor without giving sufficient reasons for so doing; but every member to fill his place and fulfil his office to which he is appointed by the Church, whose right it is to appoint and ordain all her officers. Also to be careful that there be no unnecessary debates or envyings, whisperings, backbitings, but as the scriptures of truth point out, 'with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. Also to pray one with and for each other."

"IV. And the better to provide for the peace and tranquillity of the church, and to prevent strife and divisions, in case of any dispute or debate arising in the church, (except it be a fundamental article), the lesser number to submit to the greater in the fear of the Lord. 'For God is not the Author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.'"

"*All* church matters to be kept within the church."

"V. If any Brother or Sister is called by Providence to remove to a distance from the church, we agree to give them a dismission to a sister church if they desire it."

"VI. As a church of Christ we believe from the New Testament that the Lord's-day should be devoted to his service, and that no worldly business, except of necessity, should go forward on that day; but that it be spent in prayer, reading, attendance on the worship of God. Servants ought not to be allowed to follow their own carnal inclinations on the Lord's-day, but be persuaded to attend some place of Worship."

"VII. We hold it unlawful in any unjust manner, to buy, or beg, or hire anything out of the hands of another, but that each of us follow our respective call and vocation according to the word, and that we study to be quiet and do our own business."

"VIII. We hold that all unruly and careless walkers are to be warned thereof and admonished, but if they persist in hardness and obstinacy, they must be rebuked sharply, and if they prove finally impenitent must be separated from the church."

"Lastly. The Apostle observes, 'As we have therefore opportunity let us do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' Brotherly love demands such a conduct in church members to their brethren in distress; on this consideration we are persuaded that it is our incumbent duty to consider the Lord's poor, and relieve them according to our several abilities, as knowing that which is done to them is done to our great Redeemer, as he himself declares, 'for as much as ye have done it unto one of these little ones ye have done it unto me.' These things we approve and desire to be found in the practice of. Amen."

CHAPTER XXII.

Mr Coxe Feary's Call to the Pastorate, and the Building of the Meeting-house.

Still quoting from the Church book, we read:

"The Congregation increasing, the barn in which they assembled was found too small; it was, therefore, proposed to open a subscription for the purpose of building a Meeting-house sufficient to accommodate the congregation. The subscriptions amounted to £300. They purchased a piece of land, and on the 10th day of April, 1787, the first brick of the present Meeting-house was laid by C. Feary.

The following hymn was considered as adapted to the occasion:—

"These walls we to thine honour raise,
Long may they echo with thy praise;
And thou descending bless the place
With choicest tokens of thy grace.

Here let the great Creator reign,
With all the graces of his train;
While power divine his word attends,
To conquer foes, and cheer his friends.

And in the great decisive day,
When God the nations shall survey,
May it before the world appear,
That crowds were born to glory here."

Dr. Doddridge.

How much Mr Feary's heart was in this business appears from the following memorandum:

"April 10th, 1787. I am brought to see through Divine Goodness, what I have so ardently wished for, a place for Jehovah, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob, begun to be built. Laid the foundation stone with my own hands. O! that it may be for the Divine Glory, for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, and for the everlasting salvation of my fellow sinners, that, when the Lord comes to number up his people, it may appear that this and that man were born there. And when my head shall rest in the cold grave, may it still be the seat of the Redeemer's empire. Amen."

During the building of the Meeting-house, the infant church continued its progress and elected its good and earnest leader to be its first minister. "1787, May 9th. The church met, and after prayer and singing, it was agreed upon to give Coxe Feary a call to the pastoral office. Mr Asplan was appointed to speak for the church. Addressing himself to them, he said,—'Brethren,—We have reason to admire the condescension and goodness of the great Jehovah, that we who once sat in the darkness and shadow of death, destitute of the gospel of Christ, and without hope in the world, are now so highly favoured as to be a church of Christ. Having no Pastor regularly appointed over us, we believe it to be the will of the great Shepherd, that there should be a succession of teachers and pastors in the Christian church to the end of the world, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ. We have the greatest reason to believe that our Brother Feary is designed for the ministry, and that the providence of God seems to point him out to us as a

suitable person for our pastor. For my part I am free to confess that the Lord has blessed his labours of love to my soul many times. I have frequently been refreshed under his ministry, and have been made to rejoice in the Lord Jesus. I have no doubt but you have been sharers with me in those happy seasons. Under these considerations, I hope you will agree with me in thinking it to be the will of God, that we should give our brother Feary a call to take the pastoral care of us. My brethren, you have a right to speak freely upon this subject, as the choice of a minister depends upon the choice of the people. Therefore, if you think that our dear friend and brother, who is now before you, is qualified to teach you in the great truths of religion, and that you wish him to be over you in the Lord, I would have you signify your approbation by holding up your hands.'

"The church and congregation present testified their approbation by a show of hands. Brother Asplan, addressing himself to Coxe Feary, then said,—'Dear Brother, You see how the hearts of your brethren are determined, and you hear their call. I humbly hope you will consider it as the call of the Lord by them. In His name and theirs, I request your answer.'

"C. Feary, being deeply impressed with a sense of his own weakness and of the great importance of the work, was constrained to say, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' But a great variety of the most encouraging circumstances having attended his labours among them, he felt a conviction that it was his duty to accept the call, and comply with their affectionate request. He accordingly returned the following answer to Mr Asplan. 'Sir, It affords me a high degree of satisfaction to find that your affectionate attachment to me is such, that you are willing to entrust

me with the edification of your souls in the important concerns of religion. I thank you for the confidence you have reposed in me, begging that through Divine grace I may be enabled to command your increasing affection and esteem, as becomes a servant of Jesus Christ. Nothing but a full conviction of my usefulness, under the blessing of God, among you, joined with a full conviction of God's having put me into the ministry, could have induced me to comply with your kind and affectionate invitation to take the oversight of you in the Lord. Under these considerations, I do solemnly, as in the presence of God, accept your call, and am ready to take the oversight of you in the Lord.'

"The business was closed with fervent prayer to God. that this solemn transaction might be crowned with the blessings of Divine grace, so that he who sowed, and they who should reap, might rejoice together."

Mr Feary speaks further on this subject in his short memorials.

"1787, May 9th. This afternoon the church met, and gave me a unanimous call to take the pastoral care of them. I could not resist their kind and affectionate request; accordingly I accepted it; I trust not without estimating, in some measure, its importance. May the great and good Shepherd give me every qualification needful for such an arduous undertaking; so that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in my hand, and that I may look upon this day's work with the greatest thankfulness."

The plain Meeting-house was not long in building—commenced on the 10th of April, 1787, it appears to have been ready for use by October the 26th, and on that day it was opened for public worship. Mr Feary writes:

"1787, October 26th. The church and congregation had the pleasure of seeing a House for God, and this day was appointed for opening it. Mr James, one of the preachers in Lady Huntingdon's connection, delivered an excellent sermon from 1 Cor. iii. 9, 'Ye are God's building.' They collected at the doors £31 5*s.* 6*d.* In the evening good Mr Bond, of Eversden in Cambridgeshire, preached from Exod. xx. 24, 'In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.' The Congregation were very serious, and numbers enjoyed a season of refreshment from the presence of the Lord."

This Meeting-house was placed length-ways to the road. It was built of red brick, and was plain-tiled with a double span; the gables whereof faced the road. The windows were oblong at the back, all the rest were square, the panes small and leaden framed. Its size was forty feet by thirty-one feet. The entire cost, including the ground purchased, was £623 0*s.* 7*d.*

In the year 1797, the accommodation being too small, the back wall was taken down and the end walls prolonged fourteen feet, thus making the Meeting-house measure forty feet by forty-five feet. The expense of this alteration was £230 10*s.* 6*d.*

In the year 1805 a new Vestry was built, which cost £100. And in 1817 a new gallery was added for the Sunday School children at a cost of £192. In this state the old Meeting-house continued, until in the year 1875 it was pulled down to be replaced by the present substantial edifice.

The purpose of the Meeting-house was thus expressed in the original Trust deed; "For the worship of Almighty God according to the custom of Protestant Dissenters."

1788, April 23rd. This day was set apart for the settlement of Coxe Feary, or publicly to recognise what the church had heretofore done in calling him to the pastoral office amongst them. A respectable number of ministers and messengers, whom they had invited from neighbouring churches to behold their faith and order, were present. Mr Robert Robinson of Cambridge began the service by singing the hundredth psalm of Dr Watts. He read the eighteenth of St John's Gospel, and in such a striking and peculiar manner as to surprise the whole congregation, which was very numerous. He next prayed for a Divine blessing; after which, in the most free and familiar manner, he pointed out the principles of Protestant Dissenters—their reasons for separating from the Establishment—the folly and stupidity of those who never examine for themselves—and the propriety of calling no man master, but Jesus Christ. He then turned to one of the Deacons, and requested him to relate the measures which the church had previously taken; which being done, Mr Robinson requested C. Feary to give a confession of his faith, which he very readily did, by observing, "that he felt unspeakable pleasure in declaring his belief of the existence of the Great Cause of all things, in whom we live, and move, and have our being!" Then he followed with thirteen more separate articles, such as the sufficiency, authenticity and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures—the personal distinctions of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—the doctrine of Divine Providence—the universal depravity of the whole human race—the impossibility of man extricating himself from the consequences of the fall—eternal and personal election—particular redemption—justification, pardon and eternal life, as the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ—the new

birth, with the final perseverance of such in holiness as have experienced that divine change—Christian fellowship —the resurrection of the body—the day of judgement—the final happiness of the saints, and the everlasting punishment of the wicked.

"Mr Stevenson, of Castle Hedingham in Essex, preached a most affecting and interesting sermon to the church and congregation, from Titus ii. 10, 'Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.' The service was closed with prayer and thanksgiving."

We are told that Mr Stevenson, with his accustomed kindness, came to Bluntisham at a very short notice, although the distance was nearly fifty miles. The ordination service had been long, the meeting-house was crowded to excess, and the people were almost exhausted; still the church and congregation were to be addressed. But although Mr Stevenson rose under such unfavourable circumstances, his serious and affectionate manner, accompanied with an anecdote or two, so exhilarated the spirits of the people, that the effect produced may not inaptly be compared to that of a cordial given to a person just ready to faint. Mr Stevenson entered into his rest a few months before Mr Feary. He had been sinking for a considerable time, but having a fine flow of natural spirits, being delightfully supported by the hopes of the Gospel, and loving the Master whom he served with his spirit, he embraced every opportunity of addressing his flock. At the age of 73, and with a pulse which for a considerable time was at most only 28, and sometimes so low as 24, he preached on what are called the four last things. At the close of 1821, he delivered a discourse to the aged, and gave notice that on the morning of the new-year's day he should preach to the young. That new year's day came,

but he passed quietly away on this the first day of 1822. His daughter lived to extreme age, and when over ninety years old taught in the Sunday School of her father's chapel. The chapel is not far from the ancient church and keep—the fortress-home for seven centuries of the Earls de Vere.

The Rev. Joseph Saunders, of Cambridge, Mr Coxe Feary's friend, was invited to give the "*charge*" at the ordination; but the state of his health not permitting him to be present, his place was supplied by his brother, the Rev. Thomas Saunders, of Coventry. These two brothers were descended from Laurence Saunders, who suffered martyrdom at Coventry in the reign of Philip and Mary.

"April 27th. Being Lord's-day, the church for the *first time* had the pleasure of breaking bread, remembering their dear Lord at the sacred supper. It was a pleasurable opportunity—a foretaste of that 'rest which remaineth for the people of God.'"

And so the little church was formed—if not in the blood of its founder, yet in his toil and sweat. There was the farm to look after—the men to direct—the wife and children to maintain—the living to be got, and all things to be kept together—the dislike to break away from his parish church—much fear and anxiety, "lest I run before I am called," and "lest I fail in my undertaking"—the shrinking first from reading before people and then from praying and speaking in public "which I have never done before"—all so strange and new—and "what call have I to it?" "and what fitness for it?" "Who can be sufficient for these things?" Yes, it was founded in toil and trouble—in fear and trembling—in these, and in prayer and the firm resolve were the foundations laid. But strong faith, living love and bright hope, gave power

for the accomplishment of the work, and "underneath were the everlasting arms." "All things are possible to him that believes." Dr Döllinger can see in the Nonconformist religious communities of the Anglo-Saxons, nothing but the singular power that race possesses for organization, but thinks they only flourish while their ministers preach the comfortable doctrine of election which suits their seat-holders' love of ease. But we know that it is only as our ministers are true, earnest and "untruckling," that they secure the respect and support of their people.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Life of Mr Coxe Feary.

Mr Coxe Feary gives a history of himself in a series of entries in the church book, they are written in the third person, and we cannot do better than quote from them.

"Coxe Feary, a native of the parish of Bluntisham, was born on the 29th of May, 1759. His parents were not rich, but respectable. They put him to a school in the village, where he was taught reading, writing and arithmetic. He was naturally of a lively and cheerful disposition, and like other boys of his age, fond of play: though wild and giddy, he was not viciously inclined—his levity never bordered on profaneness. He was taken from school at twelve years of age to attend to the business of the farm, such as keeping sheep, ploughing, etc.: but as he had a thirst for reading, his leisure hours were devoted to his books. The religious books which he read were, 'Sherlock on Death,' 'The Whole Duty of Man,' Stackhouse's 'History of the Bible,' and other works of that complexion. But being ignorant of God's method of salvation, he laboured to recommend himself to the Divine favour by a life of moral virtue, and supposed that he should obtain salvation 'by the deeds of the law.' Under the influence of this principle, he laid aside the amusements of the world, devoted his attention to the study of

the moral precepts of the Bible, avoided what appeared to him sinful, and constantly attended public worship at the parish church. His neighbours, therefore, entertained and expressed a high opinion of his religious conduct, which only made him upon better terms with himself, and led him to say in his heart, 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are.'

"Although he had not, at this time, any clear or distinct views of the gospel, yet there was reason to believe the Lord was graciously leading him to a more full discovery of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. As he very frequently retired for prayer, and walked in the fields for meditation and praise, these seasons have been delightful and interesting to his mind. The beauties of creation, the harmony of the groves, and the unbounded goodness of God in his providence, have so filled his heart with the most delightful sentiments of gratitude and joy, that with tears of satisfaction he has broken out in the language of David, 'What is man that thou art mindful of him! and the son of man that thou visitest him!' He now began to be dissatisfied with the trifling, and, as he thought, the irreligious conduct of those who attended the worship at the Established Church in the parish where he lived. This induced him to turn his attention to the Dissenters, in whom he thought he saw more regard for religion than among the persons of the Establishment.

"The Baptists in the neighbouring village he found high Calvinists, and some of them very narrow-minded and illiberal, pronouncing destruction on all who did not believe their creed; this prevented his going amongst them. At Earith there was a congregation of the people called Quakers, whose virtuous and moral behaviour, united with their belief of the dignity of human nature,

and the freedom of the will in matters of religion, which at that time were according to his own views, reconciled him to attend occasionally their place of worship. In this undecided state he continued till about 1780, when the dialogues of that pious and eminent man of God, Mr James Hervey, fell into his hands. Having been much delighted and entertained with his 'Meditations,' he set about the reading of 'Theron and Aspasio' with expectations of pleasure; but being a stranger to the gospel plan of salvation, he found himself very much offended with the doctrines of Divine grace, and laid aside the book with a determination to read it no more, because he found his favourite notions of free-will and the merit of good works wholly discarded. Thus unsettled, his religious views made him very unhappy and distressed; and, having no religious friend or companion to 'expound unto him the way of God more perfectly' he was much embarrassed, and regretted he had ever seen the work. In 1782, it was impressed upon his mind to give the book a more close and impartial reading; and such was the nature of the impression, that he felt a degree of impatience to see it a second time, notwithstanding his former determination. He perused the work, and the Lord blessed the reading of it to the conversion of his soul to the Lord Jesus Christ. He now saw and deeply lamented, the sin folly and abominable pride of his own heart, in that he should have been all his life building upon a false foundation, and setting at nought 'the chief corner stone.' But he was now enabled to say with the Apostle, 'what things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.' His views of God's method of salvation, revealed in the

'glorious gospel of the blessed God,' became the joy and delight of his soul; yea, such were the peace and happiness of his mind, arising from the hopes of immortality and eternal life, that he found a 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.' Thus it appears, God is a sovereign: he 'has mercy on whom he will have mercy;' and in producing a change of heart, his Divine influence is like the wind, which 'bloweth where it listeth;' we 'hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.'

"Being favoured with the distinguishing love of God to himself, the chief of sinners, he began to feel a benevolent and tender concern for the salvation of his fellow-creatures. He pitied them, he wept over them, he prayed over them. It was his heart's desire and prayer to God that they might be saved. He endeavoured to convince them of their danger in being without hope, and without God in the world. He entreated them to flee from the wrath to come, to leave the city of destruction, and flee to the mountain. Yea, how frequently did he say to those about him in the village, 'We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. Come, go with us, and we will do you good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.'"

These sentiments are embodied in a letter which Mr Feary wrote in 1783, to a friend at Bluntisham, who after Mr Feary's death would speak of his solicitude for the spiritual well-being of his neighbours.

RESPECTED FRIEND,

I have taken up my pen to communicate to you, that one evening, being retired from the hurry and toil of the day, I was very agreeably exercised in mind at the stillness of the night. [He then alludes to the cessation of human

labour at the close of the day, and the period when the approach of darkness puts an end to the exertions of man.] Thus my friend, it will be with our infinitely momentous and everlasting concerns, in that melancholy hour when death will summon us to make our appearance before the awful majesty of heaven, and lodge our bodies in the silent chambers of the grave. I, therefore, beg you to remember what the wise man says, 'There is no work or device or knowledge in the grave, whither we are going:' that is, there is no repentance or amendment in the caverns of the tomb. 'Behold now is the accepted time! Behold now is the day of salvation!' This is the only time allotted for obtaining the great reward, and making thy salvation sure. And art thou lulled in a vain security, or dreaming in a supine inadvertency? Start, O start from thy lethargy, and gird up the loins of thy mind. Work while it is day. Improve the present seed-time, that eternity may yield a plenteous and joyful harvest. That you may be awakened by these considerations, and stirred up to a firm faith in the ever blessed Jesus, and a steady adherence to the Gospel of Christ, and may know by happy experience 'what is the hope of your calling, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to themward that believe,' is the desire of him who is writing to you. I must beg you to attend to the Scriptures, and to pray to God that he may enlighten your mind by his Holy Spirit, that you may see the gracious privileges contained therein. They, my friend, are the only rule for us to walk by—they testify of Christ—point him out as the only procuring cause of a sinner's acceptance with God, and his enjoyment of eternal felicity. He hath made peace through the blood of his cross, and through that blood we have redemption. It is with regret of mind, my friend, that I think of your carelessness, for I have a great desire for your everlasting welfare, which has been my chief motive for writing to you. Therefore, examine yourself impartially—consider how your affairs stand with God, and see

if you have an interest in the merits of Christ; for if you have not, (I dare not flatter you,) you are in a state of death. I hope, therefore, you will say, 'What must I do to be saved?' I shall reply, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.' To him I hope you will turn for pardon, for justification and for eternal life, which is the gift of God—a gift which I humbly wish you and I, and all the children of God may possess.

Your well-wisher,

COXE FEARY.

We now return to Coxe Feary's memoranda in the church book.

"Some few of his neighbours began to think him righteous over much, many others listened to him with a sincere desire of being instructed in the knowledge of salvation; and to whom the Lord made him a blessing. Notwithstanding the total change he had undergone in his religious views and feelings, he still continued to worship at the parish church, though the preaching was by no means suited to his views. This was a circumstance he very much regretted; but such were the prejudices of his education, that he could by no means be reconciled to worship with the Dissenters. From this embarrassment he was happily relieved in the following manner:—In the spring of the year 1784, he was called to Huntingdon on business, where, in a bookseller's shop, he providentially met with a Mr B., a pious clergyman, who preached the gospel at the neighbouring villages of Stukeley and Orford. After some conversation on religious publications, Mr B. very kindly invited him to take his tea with him. The invitation was gladly accepted, and the interview was truly interesting, as it led him to hear Mr B. next Lord's-day, where he found

himself at home under the sound of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. After the services of the day he returned home, rejoicing to think he had found a place in the Establishment where the glad tidings of salvation were proclaimed to poor sinners. He now formed the resolution of constantly attending Mr B.'s preaching, but by the persuasion of that gentleman he was induced to give up his design, and to attend the labours of Mr Venn, of Yelling, where he could enjoy the services both parts of the Lord's day. On the day called Easter Sunday, he went to hear Mr Venn, with whose lively and zealous preaching he was much delighted. This event led to an intimate acquaintance with that gentleman, which was ever after esteemed as one of the happiest circumstances of his life. Being honoured with the friendship of such a judicious, pious and excellent man, and with the privilege of constantly hearing him preach, he was much gratified, and became established in the faith and hope of the gospel. In the autumn of the same year (1784), the Life and Sermons of the famous Mr Whitfield providentially fell into his hands. Being at St Ives market, he went into the bookseller's shop as usual, where lay three volumes of Whitfield's works. On looking into that part of his life where he preached to the colliers of Kingswood, near Bristol, and to the populace in Moorfields, he was much delighted, and surprised he had never before heard of Mr Whitfield. He asked whose books they were; the bookseller replied, 'They are yours; I sent an order for some books, and they have made a mistake, and have sent me these methodistical books instead of what I ordered. I did not return them, but kept them for you, thinking you would be pleased with them, as nobody reads so many religious books as your-

self.' The price was eighteen shillings. Thinking this was more than he could well spare he returned home without them; though, just as he left the shop, the bookseller said 'I shall not send them back, as I expect you will alter your mind by another market-day.' And as he predicted, so it was; for having found on enquiry what a pious, laborious and zealous servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, Mr Whitfield had been, he was determined to have them."

Mr Audley tells us that "about this time he first visited Bluntisham. Mr Feary was in the field. He went to him there, and a conversation took place on Church Government. He was agreeably surprised at the correctness of those sentiments which he thought Mr Feary entertained on that subject, especially as they appear to have been drawn wholly from the New Testament. The next day being Lord's day, he heard Mr Feary preach in the barn from Psalm lxxiii. 1, 'Truly God is good to Israel;' and he himself spoke to the people in the evening; the first time, he apprehends, of his addressing a congregation in public."

Mr Feary now commenced what he calls "Short Memorials of the Lord's dealings with him; or a journal of some of the most remarkable occurrences in the course of his Christian experience, from the year 1786."

"May 8, 1786. This day found myself much exercised about my temporal affairs, which very much embarrassed me, not seeing any probable source of relief to answer my present demands. In my distress I retired to the Throne of Grace, spread my case before the Lord, and was enabled to plead his promise and faithfulness to his children. To his glory I record it, he heard and answered me in the day of my distress, by sending me a supply from a friend

from whom I had no expectation. Thus in the mount of the Lord his gracious hand shall be seen.

"14th. In the morning expounded; in the after part of the day preached in the barn, to a very crowded congregation. Was remarkably happy and composed in the first part of the service, but in the last how wretched! My mind unaffected, my ideas confused and distracted, insomuch that I was made to cry to the strong for strength. I am perfectly satisfied that I am nothing—that Christ is all in all; and that without the gracious influence of the spirit of God, both preaching and praying are uncomfortable work. In the evening, through the persuasion of friends, went to Chatteris, and preached in the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel. It being the first time I ever preached from amongst my own people, it very much embarrassed my mind; and what added to my embarrassment was, that Mr ——, the General Baptist, came with his people to hear me. I, knowing he was a violent opposer of Calvinism, through some warm disputes which had taken place at C., was fearful I should have been very much confounded; but, through the goodness of the Lord to me a poor, feeble young man, I was helped to speak with some comfort and freedom, from John x. 27, 28.

"17th. This evening I walked to Somersham, and for the *first time* preached there, from Ephes. ii. 1—3. The barn was very full, my mind was in some degree at liberty, the people very serious, and I hope the Lord was with us of a truth. This evening, preached from Psalm xxviii. 9, 'Save thy people and bless thine inheritance; feed them also, and lift them up for ever.' Found my mind much impressed while speaking to the people, and believe it was 'a season of refreshment from the presence of the Lord.' I never saw a more affecting season; the congregation

seemed dissolved in tears, and my soul never felt a more settled peace in the enjoyment of my God than at this time. But, O! wretched man that I am! I was soon after tempted to have high and flattering thoughts of myself. O Lord, pardon the extreme depravity of a poor worm, and teach him to give thee all the glory. Amen."

"19th. My mind was rendered extremely uncomfortable, on being informed that my dear brother was so provoked at my being engaged in the ministry, that he said in his warmth, he believed I should, through my foolishness, bring myself to poverty. Being sensible that my engaging in so noble a cause would be unfriendly to my temporal pursuits, somewhat depressed my spirits, but found relief on reflecting that the Lord Jesus Christ, and his first Disciples, had little in the world but shame and reproach. I was enabled to rejoice in the choice I had made, and had rather serve the Lord in a state of indigence, than be without his favour in a state of affluence. May the Lord help a poor feeble creature to hold out unto the end, that he may be saved. Amen."

Mr Feary had afterwards the pleasure of receiving this his only brother into the church.

"24th. This evening, expounded the 42nd Psalm at *Woodhurst*. Found my mind comfortable in speaking to the people. Many were refreshed, and made to rejoice in the Lord their God. When I returned home, I found the Widow C— labouring under extreme distress of soul, from a powerful and deep conviction of the evil of sin, and, like the Philippian Gaoler, crying out 'What must I do to be saved?' I spoke to her of the ability of Christ 'to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.' O Lord, how gracious art thou to an unworthy wretch, in making his labours of love effectual to promote the

Redeemer's kingdom. Not unto me, but to thy name be the praise. Amen.

"July 2nd. This day, experienced a most painful and humbling sense of my own unworthiness; insomuch that I thought myself the vilest creature in the world, and was made to cry, 'Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults; then shall I be innocent from the great transgression.'"

1787, May 15th. This morning as he rode out, he reflected:—"In that awful hour when death shall execute his summons, and call me away from the present state of things, I must bid adieu to these rural retreats and shady groves. Farewell! ye pleasing scenes of nature, with all your variegated beauties, with all your lively charms and balmy sweets; no more must you regale my senses with sacred joy and vast delight. Farewell! ye sprightly inhabitants of the woods, ye little songsters of the groves, who warble forth your great Creator's praise; no more will your charming melody swell upon my ear. Farewell! my dear relations; no more will your affectionate regard be esteemed by me, while you attend my poor remains to the grave, and let fall the parting tear for one who will be regardless of that sorrow which may rend your heart, and insensible to all your care of him—a lifeless mass, fit companion for fellow-worms. Farewell! my beloved friends and companions in tribulation, united in the bonds of the gospel, and with whom I have taken sweet counsel and walked to the house of God in company; no more will your animating conversation about the glories of the Redeemer's kingdom be enjoyed by me. Farewell! my dear flock, the people of my care; no longer shall I be pleased with beholding you flocking to the house of God, to hear his word and celebrate his praise. But let me

stop my roving meditations, and recollect that, should I be immediately snatched from all these dear delights, and close my eyes upon these pleasing scenes of nature, it will be to behold the God of nature and of grace in the person of his Son; to hear the songs of the redeemed; to join the friends of the bridegroom; to dwell for ever in perfect bliss, where sorrow shall be banished—for ever banished—from the realms of peace. Then come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.

"Sept. 12th. While looking over my men at work, this day, was much pleased with the surrounding prospect. The whole field appeared alive. The men busily loading the wheat, the multitudes of poor but industrious people gathering up the fragments that nothing be lost, and the active youths driving the loaded corn across the furrowed land, anxious for the day to cry, 'Harvest home.' How profusely does our gracious benefactor repay our labour and toil. We plough, we sow, and wait the proper season: it is all we can do. The Lord alone causeth the earth to bring forth her increase. O that we may devote our days to that God who has promised that 'While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.' This being the case, the cultivation of our lands ought to be in humble dependence upon God; and instead of disgracing the close of harvest with revelling and drunkenness, which is too frequently the case, to lift up our hearts in humble gratitude to the God of all our mercies.

"1788, Jan. 29th. This day had a pleasant interview with Mr Brock, at the house of friend Willson, at Witton. In social prayer was remarkably comfortable; felt refreshed from the presence of the Lord; was ready to say with David, 'In my prosperity I shall never be moved.

Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong.' But how soon are our brightest days beclouded! Our comforts, how soon they are gone! The next day as I returned home, I never felt more miserable than at that time. Under a sense of the evil of my own heart, I was ready to sink, and was made to say, 'Behold, I am vile; I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.' I felt myself disposed to envy the very brutes of the earth, and to wish myself *any creature*, but a *sinful one*.

"Sep. 16, 1790. This morning was very pleasant in reading Elliot's Appendix [in answer] to Dr Priestly on the Atonement, and never felt my mind more impressed with the importance of the subject. Am fully persuaded that this glorious doctrine is fully consistent with, and worthy of, the glorious character of Jehovah, and well suited to the case of such sinful creatures as we are. A view of the doctrine at this time was peculiarly affecting to me, as I had laboured under a very painful sense of my extreme depravity of heart and the deceitfulness of sin, which renders the blood of Christ precious as the only means of pardon in the sight of God. How welcome are the reviving rays of the sun to a poor traveller, exposed to cold and storm; so is a sense of pardon to a poor sinful creature, who feels the evil of sin.

"Dec. 10th. This evening found myself very ill after preaching, with a violent sinking, which increased to that degree that I could not sit up. About nine o'clock the complaint in my stomach brought on my fits, which did not leave me till about three o'clock in the morning. Was exceedingly ill all the next day, but found my mind comfortably supported; was helped to stay myself upon the Lord, and thought of my approaching dissolution with great composure. Was helped to say with David, 'Yea,

though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.' I continued getting better till the next Lord's day, when the following alarming circumstance happened. The person who attended me in my affliction, by mistake, gave me two large tea spoonfuls of *laudanum*, which, after an hour or two, brought upon me such a feebleness in all my limbs that I could not support myself. Was led up to bed, my head almost distracted, and it was with the utmost difficulty I was kept from going to sleep; which, if I had done, it is probable I should never have awaked again. I trust I see the wisdom of God in this gracious dispensation of his, which was designed to do me good; and hope that I am made to say, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.'"

Soon after this period, Mr Feary's sentiments on the question of baptism underwent a change. At what time his doubts first arose on the subject of infant baptism is not known; but as he was on friendly terms with Mr Robinson of Cambridge, and went to consult him previous to his ordination, it is probable that gentleman might suggest something to him on the subject. Be that as it may, some of his friends, who heard him converse on the subject, after he became a Baptist, are persuaded that Mr Robinson's work on baptism did more than anything else to convince him, as he expresses it, that infant baptism was not the baptism of the New Testament.

"1791. Coxe Feary having been dissatisfied with infant sprinkling, as not being the baptism of the New Testament, after much prayer and enquiry into the subject, he entirely relinquished the practice of it, and openly avowed himself a believer in adult baptism; and, according to the

convictions of his mind, was baptised on the 5th of April, 1791."

About nine o'clock in the morning of that day, there were assembled not fewer than five hundred people of different ranks, at Over Cote, beside the river Ouse, when Coxe Feary read the following hymn.

> Jesus and shall it ever be,
> A mortal man ashamed of thee?
> Ashamed of thee whom angels praise,
> Whose glories shine through endless days?
>
> Ashamed of Jesus! sooner far
> Let evening blush to own a star!
> He sheds the beams of light divine
> O'er this benighted soul of mine. etc. etc.

The hymn was sung with the greatest solemnity and devotion by the congregation, who seemed much impressed with the sentiments contained in it. He then prayed for the presence and blessing of the great Head of the Church; after which he addressed the people, stating his views of the nature of Christian baptism, as being from heaven and not of men. The mode, not by sprinkling, but by a total immersion of the subjects in water: 'Buried with him by baptism into his death.' The proper subjects of baptism, not infants, but men and women, making a public profession of their faith in Christ. 'He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved.' 'Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?' 'If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.' The end, 'not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.' After having addressed the listening multitude on each of these particulars, Coxe Feary with twelve of his friends proceeded to the river, where Mr Baron, of Cottenham, baptised them. After the

friends were dressed, he gave them a suitable exhortation, and closed the solemn service with prayer and thanksgiving.

"1791, June 9th. Coxe Feary, for the first time, administered the ordinance of baptism, by baptising five of his aged female friends. It was truly an interesting sight, to behold them go through the ordinance with such composure and satisfaction."

"1792, Jan. 1st. Am brought to see the commencement of another year. Having obtained help of God, I continue to this day. When I look back on the past year, I have cause to say, it has been a remarkable period in my experience. I appeared infatuated with a desire of wild speculations, which being yielded to, soon produced a kind of scepticism, which led me to look on all Christian experience as enthusiasm, and was ready to treat it with the utmost contempt, as cant and hypocrisy. This brought a damp upon my soul, chilled my affections for God, and love for the souls of my people. In this state of mind, my devotional exercises were, at times, very formal and flat. Preaching became dry, and I believe very uninteresting. No conversation suited me, but that which turned upon *Politics* or *Theological* controversy. In short, I appeared to myself to be making rapid strides to *Infidelity* and *Deism*. In this situation I was not happy, felt alarmed at the danger of my state, which frequently, at the close of the year, brought me to lament my case before God, who very justly might have given me up to strong delusions to believe a lie, as a sure sign of future destruction. But, adored be His holy name, He has caused the riches of His grace to be manifested in me, the chief of sinners, by bringing me back to his fold again. I am, beyond the shadow of doubt, confident,

that salvation is entirely of grace, and that Jehovah will have mercy because he will have mercy."

"July 21st. Such an astonishing change took place in the weather last night, as is seldom known in the course of divine providence. The day before was remarkably fine, very hot, and the hay was made all the day uncommonly good. But in the night, when all were asleep, there was such a fall of rain, attended with a strong wind, that the meadows in the morning were all under water, and the fruits of the earth seemed to be threatened with immediate destruction. The people seemed struck with the most solemn awe. Such changes as these ought to teach us the sad uncertainty of all things here below, so that we may learn to lay up treasure in heaven. I being likely to suffer considerably by the flood, under the first impressions of alarm felt a temptation to murmur against the Lord. But after recollecting myself, was enabled, through the goodness of the Lord, to say, 'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.'

"August 9th. This day I find, upon examination, that pride and sinful thoughts are my greatest evils. As to the first, I find it discovers itself in all I do. Have I enlargement in my public work of preaching and praying? I feel it heaving my heart. Is my company wanted by my friends? I am ready to be proud of it. Do I engage in the exercise of religious duties? I feel its influence. In short, I frequently find it spoils all I do. O Lord, give me a greater share of humility and godly simplicity, that I may say, 'Not unto me, not unto me, but to thy name be all the praise.' And as for sinful thoughts, I am sometimes so distressed, that I am fearful lest I should be carried away by them without control. O Lord, keep

me by thy Almighty power, that I fall not in the hour of temptation; but do thou make me more than conqueror, through him that hast loved me. Amen."

He now writes in a more cheerful strain.

"1793, Jan. 4th. I am brought to the beginning of another year. I trust, through the goodness of the Lord, it has been a more comfortable one to my soul than the last. Have had my mind more free from unbelief and doubts. Have felt the foundation of my hope, the unchangeable love of God in Christ Jesus, to bear my eternal concerns; so that I can sing with Dr Watts,

'How can I sink with such a prop,
As my eternal God?'

No! This is the rock, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. On feeling the importance of the glorious doctrines of the gospel in my own mind, was enabled to urge the necessity of them with greater ardour in my public preaching. I hope, on the whole, that God has made this shaking season of use to establish my mind more in the truth. Just as the wind, by shaking the young trees, causes them to strike deeper root into the earth, it has made me *examine closely every article of my faith;* so that I can now say, what I believe is the effect of a full conviction of its truth: May that God, who has, for the wisest purposes, permitted my mind to be so exercised, keep me, by the power of His grace, that I may abide at my post, be found faithful unto death, and so receive a crown of life. Amen and Amen."

"Jan. 6th. Lord's day. This morning I preached from Psalm lv. 6. Found my mind very happy, while I endeavoured to point out the infelicities the Christian pilgrim meets with in this sinful world, and that passionate desire he feels in his heart to be at rest. I hope the Lord Jesus

was with us of a truth. In the afternoon found my spirits sink, and my mind much embarrassed at the thought of preaching, which made me dread going into the pulpit; but was happily disappointed, for the Lord was very gracious unto me, insomuch that I found a comfortable degree of liberty and pleasure in speaking to the people from Psalm lxxxvii. 3, 'Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of our God.' Thus how frequently does the Lord disappoint our expectations. When we are fearful, he encourages us; when confident, he humbles us, by letting us feel our own weakness and nothingness, that we may not lean to our own understandings.

"Feb. 18th. Was called by providence to preach the funeral sermon of my much esteemed friend and Christian brother, Mr Nunn, of Over in Cambridgeshire. The text which he left for that purpose was John xv. 19. Mr Nunn was admitted a member of the church, Dec. 1, 1791, after giving a pleasing and most edifying account of the Lord's gracious dealings with him.

"March 10th. Lord's day. When I arose this morning, I found myself much indisposed, and was fearful I should not be able to preach. But the Lord was truly good to me in abating the force of my complaint, so that I was enabled to go through the work of the day with considerable ease, and much comfort in my mind. I appeared to draw near to eternity—was perfectly composed at the thoughts of my dissolution, as my soul did not appear to shrink from dying. But like good old Simeon, could say, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'

"Sept. 23rd. This evening, at the prayer meeting, in the first part of the service I found my mind quite indisposed for religious exercises; my thoughts turning

on my temporal concerns, which at this time were very trying. One of the friends read the 248th hymn in Rippon's selection, which was the happy means of relief to my soul, particularly the 4th verse:

> 'No good in creatures can be found,
> But may be found in thee;
> I must have all things and abound,
> While God is God to me.'

"1794, June 20th. This evening, visited friend Munns; found her approaching towards the closing scene of life, but mercifully calm and composed in mind. The fear of death was swallowed up in the glorious hopes of immortality and eternal life. In praying with her, was awfully impressed with a sense of the undiscovered world. Eternity made my soul feel similar sensations to those of Jacob, mentioned in Gen. xxviii. 7. What an unspeakable pleasure does it afford a serious mind, to visit the children of God in the hour of death, and witness the victory they obtain over the king of terrors. O Lord, grant that when I come to be struggling in the agonies of death, my soul may find divine support, and be helped to rejoice in hope of eternal life.

"1796, Dec. 31st. This is the last day of another year. I am brought, through the goodness of God, thus far. I look back upon this year with peculiar thankfulness of heart to my covenant God, who has, through grace, crowned it with loving kindness and tender mercies. As a Christian I have experienced great grace under *five* weeks pain of the stone and gravel, and fifteen more of much weakness and infirmity. I could find divine support. To His praise I here record it—as my day has been, so has grace been imparted to me, a poor worthless creature. Such have been the happy effects of this affliction to my

soul, in a spiritual point of view, that I have reason to thank God for it, and hope ever to look back upon it with pleasing reflection, and to number it among my many mercies. May the remaining years of my life be devoted to that God who has been so mindful of me, a poor worm. Amen.

"1798, March 15th. Was called to preach at Woodhurst this evening. Drank tea with my poor friends at John Bass's, whose serious and pious conversation both delighted and edified my soul. I generally find my mind more seriously impressed in the company of my poor friends, who have little else to converse about but the blessings of the gospel, and the hope they have of being with the adorable Redeemer. Such subjects never fail to warm the devout affections of the soul. After tea, I walked into the garden, was pleased at the clean and decent state it was in—felt a secret wish that all the labouring poor of the country were, like my friend, blessed with a cow and a spot of land, to raise them from that state of distress which the poor are too frequently in. My mind was led to a train of thought upon that passage, Psalm lxxxvii. 3, 'Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God;' and I preached from the words with a good deal of pleasure.

"1799, April 21st. Lord's day morning. Was much delighted in reading Elihu's reply to Job, and God's reproving him for his rashness. At the same time could not but admire the effects of divine grace in that humility it produced in Job, who, after hearing such a sublime description of the glorious majesty of God, exclaimed, 'Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea twice, but I will proceed no further.' The pleasure I find in reading the sacred Scriptures con-

vinces me of their incomparable worth. What sublime descriptions of the perfections of Jehovah—what a history of his universal Providence—what glorious doctrines—what great and precious promises of grace and strength to the godly—and what grand and glorious prospects of immortality and eternal felicity do they present to the serious mind!

"Sept. 1st. Was enabled to go through the services of this day with peculiar pleasure to myself and many of my friends. The house was crowded in the afternoon; felt much concerned for the souls of the people, while speaking of the way of the unconverted, from 1 Peter iv. 3, 4. In the evening went to Woodhurst; and as I was speaking to some friends was surprised at seeing a lark alight just by the side of us, and continue to follow us, as though it sought our protection; and so it did—for a hawk was hovering over our heads, ready to dart down upon the poor helpless creature. My mind was much struck with the sight, and led to reflect upon the state of a man who, brought to a knowledge of himself, sees the avenger of blood behind him, whilst he seeks in Christ a hiding place from the storm, and a covert from the tempest. O that sinners might be made to seek unto the Lord, who will abundantly pardon!

"Oct. 9th. This day had a pleasing and, I trust, a good opportunity at the church meeting. Felt a peculiar degree of pleasure while expounding the ninth chapter of Acts. And what gave me additional pleasure was, my dear friend and companion in life gave up herself to God and to the church, by the will of God. It is my desire and I trust prayer to God, that we may both, like Zacharias and his wife, walk in all the commandments of God's house blameless, and at last sit down with Abraham,

Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of our heavenly Father.

"1800, June 28th. This day, being deeply affected with a sense of my sin and folly, and of my interruptions in the *regular duties* of the closet, having, for some time past, suffered myself to be diverted from a close attention to religious exercises, I do hereby desire, and solemnly engage, in the strength of the Lord Jesus, whose grace I hope will be sufficient for me, to watch against that sin which has so frequently beset me, and makes me cry out, 'O wretched man that I am!' entreating the Lord to help me to mortify that and my other sins, and to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. And I would also unfeignedly promise, in the strength of the Lord, to begin and close every day with reading a portion of scripture, and prayer to God. May the Lord help a poor worm thus to devote himself to God, and rest entirely upon his grace."

A friend of Mr Feary's, a Baptist minister, has furnished several letters which Mr Feary wrote to him when at the Bristol Academy.

March 23rd, 1801.

My dear Friend,—Mrs K. received your letter yesterday. It was read at the tea table at my house. It rejoiced our hearts, as we all feel interested in your welfare. I am very happy that you go out to preach so soon; let no opportunity slip, as it will give you a habit of public speaking, and greatly facilitate your future exercises in the pulpit. Accustom yourself by all means to speak off without notes, you will find them difficult to leave off in future. I do not mean by this that you should not labour in composing your sermons; by all means do; and those sermons which you study the closest will, in general, be the most useful. But, after all, look to him who has promised, 'Lo, I am with you always, even to the

end.' With respect to myself, I am sometimes depressed very much in my mind about preaching, and am ready to say, 'I shall speak no more in His name.' At other seasons the Lord affords me some tokens of His love, and then I am encouraged to go on in His strength. I hope, on the whole, I find it my delight to be engaged for God. It is a glorious work; may our hearts be more and more in it. You complain of yourself: I have no doubt but you feel much through the depravity of your own heart. Ah! my friend, this is what you will have to struggle with all the days of your life; but remember we have an High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. I once thought, as Israel of old did, that my enemies were all destroyed, that I should have nothing to do but sing my Redeemer's praise the remaining part of my journey. But, alas! these were the thoughts of an inexperienced boy, who at that time was unacquainted with the depths of Satan, and knew but little of his own heart. I have learnt by painful experience since, the meaning of the following scriptures: Psalm xix. 12, 13; Jer. xvii. 9; John xv. 5. Yea, I should sometimes despair, did I not know that God is unchangeable in the purposes of His love; and having loved His own, He loves them to the end.—Yours, etc. C. FEARY.

To the same.

FRIESTONE SHORE,
April 4th, 1801.

I received yours, and am glad you arrived safe at Bristol. Allow me to say to you again, study not to be the *fine*, but *useful* preacher. Be as chaste and correct as possible in your language, but plain and simple, lest people should suspect you preach yourself, and not Christ Jesus the Lord. You will wonder at my writing from this place. I am here for the benefit of sea bathing. My dear friend, may you increase in holiness and spiritual mindedness, which is so essential to a profitable discharge of the ministerial work. I know at this

time much the want of such a state of mind....'O that I knew where I might find him!' is the language of my heart. I am sometimes afraid I should perish in the wilderness; yea, I should have no hope were it not for the covenant love of God in Christ. While I bathe in the sea for health, may my poor polluted soul be washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; and which alone will be sufficient to remove the guilt of sin. O, how delightful will the haven of rest be to a person, like myself, in danger of wrecking every moment!—Yours, etc.

To the same.

BLUNTISHAM,
Nov. 4, 1801.

I received your long expected letter in the third week of October, instead of the first. I did not know how to account for your delay, but was fearful you were unwell. Did you know my anxiety of mind to hear from you at the time proposed, I think you would have stolen an hour from your numerous engagements, and favoured me with a line; but I excuse you, on condition *you do so no more.* I rejoice to hear you say you are comfortable in preaching. I hope you will find yourself equally comfortable at other times. It is a most desirable thing to enjoy communion and fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. This will support us under all our afflictions, and make the work of the Lord pleasant to ourselves, and profitable to the people. I am pleased—yea, it delights my soul, to hear how you go on at Bristol, and that the work of the Lord prospers. May it be the case at every place where the name of the Lord is recorded. We have had no additions since you left us. We have been well attended, and I hope we have experienced some seasons of refreshment from the presence of the Lord; but should rejoice to hear poor sinners crying out, 'What must we do to be saved?' This would greatly revive us and be like rain upon the new-mown grass.—I remain, etc.

1802, June 27th. ... "such was the debilitated state of my body, that I was with difficulty kept alive; but the Lord bringeth down to the grave, and he bringeth up; he kills, and he makes alive; and as Dr Young beautifully expresses it—

> 'What can preserve my life? or what destroy?
> An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave,
> Legions of angels can't confine me there.'

My affliction was singular, and my consolation was proportioned to the severity of my suffering; so that that promise was graciously accomplished in my experience, 'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy day is, so shall thy strength be.' For on the Lord's-day morning a sweet and composed state of mind imperceptibly came on, so that I felt no will of my own, but so resigned to God, that it is not too much to say that I found, through grace, a perfect resignation to the will of my heavenly Father, for the space of thirteen days and nights; and, although I was in constant pain and had no rest, yet such were the consolations of God to me, that I never felt the hours wearisome, but thought they passed away swift as in health. I felt Satan let loose upon me with all his fiery darts, persuading me that I had never been right, and that I was the chief of sinners. I felt no way disposed to dispute this point with the enemy, but absolutely saw myself the vilest wretch out of hell. And yet such was the goodness of God to me, that, under such a view of my exceeding sinfulness, and in the very prospect of an eternal world, I had such an unshaken confidence in the truth of that precious portion of God's word, where it is said, '*It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners*', I was constrained to say, 'and why not me?' I had such soul-

refreshing views of God's everlasting love in Jesus Christ, as I am not capable of expressing. Yea, the thoughts of being encompassed in his everlasting arms, removed all fears of death from me, so that I could in the fullest sense say with Dr Watts:

> 'Jesus can make a dying bed,
> Feel soft as downy pillows are,
> While on his breast I lean my head,
> And breathe my life out gently there.'

"What shall I render to the Lord for such manifestations of his grace alone to me who am less than the least of all saints, and the chief of sinners? I would with adoring gratitude, say, 'Not unto me, not unto me, but unto thy name be the glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake'."

Speaking on the same subject, in a letter to a friend, he says, "It was a most remarkable season to me; and that I, who am so unworthy, should have been so blessed, is more remarkable still; I never enjoyed so much of heaven in all my life; nor do I ever expect the like again on this side the grave. Such seasons of refreshment from the presence of the Lord, are the effects of sovereign goodness, and are intended to show 'what almighty grace can do'."

The Rev. Mr White, of Cirencester, in Gloucestershire, says, "I was with him in his heavy affliction in the year 1802, and never witnessed such patience resignation and sweet serenity of mind as he then displayed. It was truly delightful. I remember his saying, 'I have always admired Dr Watts' verse, 'Jesus can make a dying bed', but have thought it a kind of poetic flight. But I now find it to be a reality. 'Jesus CAN make a dying bed feel soft as downy pillows are.'"

Bluntisham exhibited, at this time, a remarkable scene. The number of persons in gigs, on horseback, and on foot, who came to enquire after Mr Feary, was unexampled; and was of itself a strong proof how much he was beloved.

The first text he preached from, after his recovery, was, Deut. xxxiii. 29, 'Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord,' etc.

On his recovery, Mr Feary resumed his ministerial and pastoral labours with the same assiduity, affection and success, as before. He eagerly availed himself of every opportunity of doing good. In October, 1802, he thus counsels and encourages his young friend at Bristol Academy:—

"I received yours, and am much delighted with the good news it contains; and hope it will encourage you to go on rejoicing, esteeming such an instance of the Lord's goodness as an earnest of what God intends to do by you. Such instances of the power of divine grace are, as the Apostle expresses it, 'Our epistles, known and read of all men.' There is nothing strengthens the hands of the faithful ministers of Christ more than their usefulness in the conversion of souls to the dear Redeemer. I hope you make a point of studying two sermons every week, that you disuse your notes as much as possible in the pulpit, and that you constantly aim to be the *useful*, more than the *refined*, preacher. When I say this, I do not wish you to be *vulgar*, but to commend yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and to the understanding of your hearers; so that you may, through divine grace, be an able minister of the New Testament.

Yours etc."

"1803, Jan. 1st. I am this morning brought to see the beginning of another year. The last has been marked with goodness and mercy from a covenant God to me, for

which I desire to say, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise his holy name.'"

"June 13th. Was this evening visited with the loss of our dear little girl, about thirteen months old. What shall I say? I would bow with all submission to the will of God, who does all things well, and say, '*Not my will but thine be done*', well knowing that dear infants are taken from the evil to come."

To his young friend at the Academy he thus writes.

"Bluntisham,
Feb. 1803.

"I am pleased to hear that you are so much engaged in business. It is the diligent hand that maketh rich. You complain of darkness; it may 'endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' I am glad that you are enabled to look through the cloud, and lay hold of the hope set before you. May the Lord keep you looking unto Jesus, from whom all our strength is derived, and who must be our all in all. The reason why so many Christians have no settled peace is, they, looking into themselves, find so many imperfections and follies, that they are filled with doubts and distressing fears. Had they clear views of the gospel, they would find in the promises of God ground to rest their weary and distressed souls upon. I am glad you see the lowness of S.'s sentiments. It will not do. I have no doubt that they are good men; but a little like those half-bred Jews, who spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. What makes me think such sentiments wrong is, that they who hold them, never act upon them when in prayer to God, or in dying circumstances. Here, the serious parts of them are as Calvinistic as old John Calvin himself. It is as you observe, a mercy to be kept in the right path.

Believe me, Yours etc."

To the same.

"BLUNTISHAM,
Oct. 1803.

"My dear friend,—I received yours, and was pleased to hear of your recovery, and have no doubt but your afflictions are designed by your heavenly Father to work together for your good; and that they will produce in you the peaceable fruits of righteousness. I do not like to hear you say that you are in doubt respecting yourself. What, have you no love for Jesus? No desire after communion with him? No concern for the prosperity of his kingdom? No love for them who bear his image? You know you have; and when the opposite of these things would prevail in your heart, you know it is your infelicity and great distress. Then why doubt? God is of one mind; none can change him. His promises are yea and amen, in Christ Jesus the Lord. If we looked more to him who came into the world to save the chief of sinners, we should have more settled peace and lasting joy.

Yours etc."

To the same.

"BLUNTISHAM,
Mar. 1804.

"What you say about Dr H. leads me to suspect that you think he is doing no good; yea, that he is, perhaps, doing harm. This I do not like, because I think it is the very same uncandid spirit which you complain of in his people. I do not say this to hurt your mind, but to guard you against indulging a disposition so unlike our Lord and his Apostles, who possessed that 'charity which hopeth all things.' Were I disposed to infidelity, I should be strongly tempted to it from the bitterness which I discern between good men on both sides of the question. One says of the other, They do not preach the gospel; the others say of them, That they are doing no good, but perhaps harm: and thus good men unchristianise

one another, and infidels triumph and many weak minds are discouraged. These things ought not to be; and indeed did we possess more of the simplicity which is in Christ, things would not be so. But we all have a great degree of selfishness about us, and we are too much disposed to love them who think the best of us.

Yours, etc."

"1804, Aug. 20th. This morning was called to witness a most painful and trying scene—the death of my dear girl, Betsy Butcher, who after twenty-three days of very heavy and painful afflictions expired at half an hour after nine o'clock." Mr Feary was her uncle and she lived with him before his second marriage. "Her affectionate attachment, her extreme gratitude and constant desire to oblige, rendered her very dear to me, and made the stroke severely felt. But, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our sorrow is not without hope; for there was reason to hope that in her 'was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel.' In the first stages of her confinement she was exercised with some painful suspicions lest she should not be right in the sight of God; but God who is rich in mercy, afforded her support and divine consolation, by impressing her mind with those sweet words: 'And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.' I frequently enquired the state of her mind. 'At times', she replied, 'comfortable; at other times, her affliction was so heavy, that she could not think of any thing else.' Two days before her death, she awoke out of her sleep, and thought she heard singing. I said 'My dear, you have been dreaming.' 'Well,' said she, 'I thought I was singing that verse—

Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between.'

The next morning, being called up, I found her, as I supposed, ready to depart—but after a few minutes she revived, and looking affectionately at me said, 'I am now going, I thought at first I should not recover.' She immediately repeated,

'O if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through Death's iron gate,
Nor fear the terrors as she past.'

Her difficulty in getting up the phlegm brought her into a great strait, which made her fear her patience should not hold out, saying, 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?' I said, in much distress, 'My dear, how is the state of your mind?' She said, 'Comfortable.' Not long after she expired without a sigh, struggle or the least motion. Thus ended my dear girl; a loss, that only God can help me to sustain.

"On the Lord's day following, my dear and much respected friend, Mr A., improved the opportunity, by a suitable discourse from Rev. xxii. 5, to the largest congregation, and the most affected, I ever witnessed in the Meeting-house at Bluntisham."

With this entry Mr Feary's "Short Memorials" close.

The following is a letter to his friend, Mr White:—

"BLUNTISHAM, *March*, 1805.

"I am glad you have so comfortable a prospect of a situation. From what you say of the place, and the kindness of the friends, it appears to me to be your duty to stay with them;

and I sincerely wish the Lord may bless you, and make you a blessing. I hope you will closely study your sermons. Aim as much as possible at a variety of subjects; you will find it necessary as a stated preacher. Do not put off writing your sermons till late in the week, but begin early, yea, let some part of the morning in each day of the week, when at home, be devoted to this purpose. Should your friends press you to visit them too frequently, do not comply, lest you should contract a habit, which will break in upon your studies, and so injure your usefulness. I need not say that the closest attention to study will not do without much prayer, as it is God that giveth the increase. Therefore a simple and child-like reliance on Him for enlargement and comfort is necessary. I am pleased at your dwelling on the doctrines of grace; not that I suspect your disbelief of them, but I have thought your fear of the abuse, might prevent a suitable degree of attention to them. The children ought not to be denied their food, because carnal professors may abuse it. No, we must 'feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.'

Yours, etc."

In 1807, on the 2nd October, Mr Feary lost a beloved Sister, Mrs Asplan, wife of one of the Deacons, who was one of his oldest and kindest friends. How he felt on this occasion, may be learned from the following extract:—

"Bluntisham, *Jan.* 4th, 1808.

"In looking over your kind letter this morning, I was surprised to find it is more than two months since I received it. Days, how swift they are! I have been, and am much concerned, for the loss of my dear Sister. It is a painful stroke. On such subjects, my feelings are not to be described. I have no doubt but our loss is her eternal gain; but such is my reluctance to part with affectionate friends, that I feel more

reconciled to the idea of my own death, than to theirs. But why should I say so? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

In January, 1815, Mr Feary sustained a very heavy loss in the death of one of his best friends, Mr William Tebbutt. His funeral sermon was preached by Mr Feary, from Luke xxiii. 42, 'Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.' In the sermon, Mr Feary gave an account of the religious experience of his friend, and of the strong consolations which he experienced in the near views of eternity. In the spring of this year Mr Feary was visited with the first stroke of paralysis. It was slight, and felt chiefly in the calf of his left leg. This attack past away without materially injuring him in any other part. From this time, however, his strength gradually declined, and he became less able to attend to the duties of his ministry; yet he preached as before, both at home, and in the neighbouring villages, with acceptance and usefulness. In the church book, he writes:—"Aug. 13th, 1815. We had a public baptizing at Over Court, in the afternoon, when, in the presence of more than a thousand spectators, who behaved with the greatest seriousness, Mr Tall, of Swavesey, baptized sixteen persons. The ordinance was solemn and impressive, and we hope the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ was with us of a truth." Mr Feary, notwithstanding his indisposition, continued his labours, as a faithful and wise steward, till April, 1817, when he was visited with a much more severe stroke of paralysis, which threatened the termination of his public ministry, and also of his life. Being a little recovered, he took a journey the next month into several neighbouring counties, hoping that the air and exercise would do him good. His debility however, was so great, that

he could not have done this, had he not travelled with a horse and gig, accompanied by a trusty servant. In this journey he was at times very cheerful, and enjoyed the company of those friends on whom he called; yet his mind seemed in a restless unsettled state, and he frequently wanted to return home. No great advantage was obtained by this excursion, except that his mind being free from the expectation of having to preach, he was more easy than he could have been with that labour in immediate view. This stroke affected the whole of his left side, and ever afterwards he was unable to use his left arm or leg, with any comfort. Yet after he came home, he preached at different times, though with much difficulty; and he continued preaching till the commencement of the year 1818. On Christmas Day, 1817, he preached at Somersham; and on the first Lord's day in 1818, he preached twice at home. His last was a funeral sermon which he preached for a young woman. After the service he said in his familiar way, "If I do not give up, I shall die in my gears." He makes an entry in the church book—"Jan. 4, 1818. This day, Coxe Feary found himself so unwell, as to be under the necessity of calling a church-meeting on the next Thursday, for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of laying aside his labours for a time." Accordingly, on Jan. 6, a church-meeting was held, when it was unanimously agreed that he should be permitted to lay aside his labours for six months, in order to see if rest, under the blessing of God, might promote his health; and that he should procure supplies from the kind assistance of neighbouring churches, the friends engaging to accommodate the ministers at their houses on the Sabbath, and their expenses to be defrayed by Mr Asplan out of the sub-

scriptions made to the minister's stipend. "The church agreed to these propositions of Mr Feary with not one dissenting voice."

About three months after Mr Feary was laid aside, he addressed the following excellent letter to his friend, the Rev. Mr White of Cirencester:—

"BLUNTISHAM, *April* 1st, 1818.

"I dislike to write letters at all times, and especially now I am so shattered. You have heard that I have given up preaching till midsummer; and such is my feeble state, that unless the warm weather improves my health, I shall not be able to do much more. It is a mercy that though I have laboured hard for *thirty-three years*, it has not been in vain. I have not spent my strength for nought; for, unworthy as I am, God has smiled on my feeble attempts to promote the Redeemer's Kingdom. I can truly say, 'to Him be all the praise.' It is painful to give up preaching the Gospel to perishing sinners before life is closed. But shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Yes, He is too wise to do wrong, and too gracious to be unkind, and I trust He will in His own good time, unworthy as I am, present me faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Though I know the cause of God at Bluntisham, and in every other place, is safe in the hands of Christ; yet I cannot help feeling a deep and anxious concern for the welfare of the church and congregation; and that the Lord would be pleased to send us a pious, affectionate, prudent, zealous and warm-hearted young man; one after God's own heart, not seeking his own glory, but the glory of Christ. Wishing you, like Abraham, to be blessed and made a blessing,

I remain,

Your affectionate friend,

C. F."

The faculties of Mr Feary's mind, as well as the members of his body, growing more and more feeble, when the six months' retreat from his public labours were expired, he gave up all thoughts of preaching, and further supplies were obtained. But as the churches in the neighbourhood had fully proved their kindness towards him and his friends, these supplies were procured from other quarters. One of the first was, Mr S. Green, son of the Mr Samuel Green who succeeded Mr Feary in the Pastorate. Other supplies followed, but Mr Samuel Green eventually settled at Bluntisham in January, 1819, as co-pastor with Mr Coxe Feary. On his coming, Mr Feary would have relinquished the pastoral office altogether, but Mr Green wished him to remain as co-pastor with himself; for though there was no probability of his preaching any more, yet his knowledge of the church and congregation, derived from experience, would, had he retained his intellect, have made him very useful. When this was proposed to him he cheerfully consented to it. After this he was only able to converse with his friends a few minutes at a time; and when he did converse with them, religion and the affairs of the church were the subjects of his conversation; and he always spoke like a man of great feeling and good judgment. By the help of his friends, he got to meeting on the Lord's day for several months after this time, and on two or three occasions administered the Lord's supper; but he could only speak in an imperfect manner.

On the 6th of April, 1819, his eldest daughter, Jane aged 18, died after a fever of but few days' continuance. When her death was first apprehended to be near, the idea of it affected him very deeply; he was indeed almost overwhelmed, and thought that he should not be able

to survive the loss: but when the event was realised, he was supported under it beyond what could have been expected. She was interred the following Lord's day. At his request, Mr Green preached a funeral sermon from Isaiah lxvi. 13, and part of the 14th verse. Notwithstanding the weight of his own affliction, and the painful occasion of this service, he expressed himself much like 'a man of God.' He knew the Lord had a just right to dispose both of him and her as seemed good in his sight; and though he would at times burst into tears at the recollection of his *dear, dutiful* daughter, he soon quieted his own mind by speaking of the providence of God.

His faculties now became more feeble, and every little circumstance seemed to overcome him; his nervous system was so weak, that he could hardly ever speak without tears. His spirits were dejected; gloomy apprehensions filled his mind; and he seemed, in general, as though the loving-kindness of the Lord, on which he had often expatiated with pleasure, gave him no comfort. Yet he had lucid intervals, when he was favoured with views of the Divine goodness, and was enabled to cast himself upon the promises of God. At these seasons he discovered what the spiritual state of his mind would have been, had he not laboured under the influence of a complication of disorders, which, by the mysterious union of body and mind, made him a prey to mental depression. To see him at this time was truly humbling to the pride of human nature. One, who for the excellency of his character, and the grace of his lips, had been the pride of all around him; who had comforted the mourner and soothed the disconsolate; himself the subject of distressing maladies, which neither medicine nor kindness could alleviate.

Though thus afflicted already, he was frequently visited with what seemed to be slight strokes of paralysis. His friends apprehended he would be removed from this world in one of them, and that the last could be at no great distance. Yet he survived one after another, till his intellectual faculty was almost gone. In Feb. 1821, his physical health which had been tolerable became very indifferent. In that month Mr Green went to him, and found him favoured with his senses, and quite comfortable in his mind; he was also able to speak with greater freedom than usual. He said he hoped he should not continue long in this world. Upon taking leave of him, Mr Green said he hoped he would be better when he should see him again, at which he burst into tears, and very feelingly said, he hoped he should, and that their next meeting would be in heaven. After this he was hardly ever able to utter anything distinctly, and took but little notice when his old friends went to see him. One of these who had a most tender regard for him, says, 'In the last interview I found him only the wreck of what he had been, but discovering all that affectionate tenderness for which he had always been distinguished.' And another old and valued friend, says, "For a long period our dear brother was not able to converse, and towards the close of life, within three or four weeks, was so much palsied, that he could not utter a word for a long time together. The last pleasant interview I had with him might be a month or five weeks before his departure, soon after a stroke of the palsy,—which we supposed would soon end his existence. I went to him and asked him how he was. He gave me no answer. I then said, 'you are very bad': I received no answer to that. I then asked him if he feared to die. He then spoke, and said 'No': and im-

mediately a flood of tears followed. I repeated 'Soon all your sorrows will be left below; and earth exchanged for heaven.' Upon which tears of joy evidently flowed abundantly. This interview with my dear brother gave me great satisfaction. But many, very many times, when his complaint was not so heavy upon him, he displayed the greatest concern for the welfare of his people, and the church and congregation which, in the hands of God, he had been the instrument of raising in his native spot. And it was evident he had more thought about his people, than he had about himself. It was peculiarly affecting that he, who had been the delight of his friends, both in his public and private capacity, and who, had he died whilst he was capable of being happy and useful among them would have been lamented as much as almost any man ever was in his own immediate connection, had now become so helpless, that his best friends rejoiced when the Lord was pleased to take him out of this world."

At length, the long-wished for period arrived, and on Monday the 22nd day of April, 1822, his spirit ascended to that felicity to which it had been long aspiring.

Mr Feary was buried near his beloved daughter, in the meeting-house burial ground, on the Lord's day following his death. The time of the funeral prevented other ministers taking part in the solemn service. The whole duty therefore fell upon Mr Green, who delivered the address at the grave, and preached a funeral sermon from 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. Mr Green on being applied to for some account of his sermon says, "I spoke what appeared to me the sense of the text, and then applied it to the congregation as well as I could, observing that they all knew more of Mr Feary than I did, it would therefore be vain in me to attempt to inform them about him. That

I saw him only as we see a tree in autumn, when its foliage is withered, and little or nothing of its summer beauty remains, with but a few leaves hanging on the branches, waiting the coming of winter to bring them to the ground. Or as a house, which indeed when first built was beautiful, but having then answered the purposes of its owner, was fast going to decay, and its materials nearly ready to mingle with their original earth. Yet though when first I knew him, he was like a house in a state of dilapidation, even its ruins were sufficient to prove it had once been a noble mansion. These remarks were to be understood in reference to his mind, not his body. I expatiated on the gospel he had preached —that he was gone to give up his account to his Lord and Master; and in a solemn manner assured the people, they must soon follow him into the eternal world, to give an account to God what use they had made of the gospel which they had heard from his lips; and charged them to consider these things, as they valued their souls and wished to be happy in a future state. The great number of people that attended on the occasion fully proved the very high esteem in which Mr Feary was held by all the neighbourhood, even for many miles round."

Mr Audley adds—"few men were more beloved where he was known than Mr Feary. He had a soul formed for friendship; and when you met him, the hearty grasp of his hand and his affectionate welcome, assured you that his professions were sincere. As no one could reasonably doubt of his sincerity, and as he united with a sound judgment, great suavity of manners, he was frequently applied to by his friends for advice, so that in his immediate neighbourhood he might be considered as a sort of public man. His talent however, lay more immediately

in the prosecution of that important work, to which he had so evidently been called by the grace of God. But although he was so ready to spend and be spent in the work of the Lord, he was so averse from engaging in such public services as ordinations, that he took a prominent part in only two of these solemnities, during the whole course of his ministry."

"The first was at the settlement of Mr John Ingle, at Ramsey, in Huntingdonshire, in which the introductory part of the service was assigned to him. This he performed to general satisfaction, for he was quite at home on the subject of dissent, and detested intolerance from whatever quarter it proceeded. The other ordination was that of Mr George Norman, at Soham, in Cambridgeshire, in 1810. His friend, Mr Andrew Fuller, of Kettering, gave the charge, and Mr Feary preached to the people from the prayer of David in the 118th Psalm: 'O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.'"

"I will relate what I had from Mr Feary himself. Mr Fuller was at Bluntisham, and had a pretty long conversation with Mr Feary on religious topics, when it was found that the sentiments of these two friends very nearly coincided. Mr Feary, as appears from his confession of faith at his ordination, was a Calvinist; and I believe, he did not swerve in after life from the principles he then maintained."

"Mr Feary as a preacher was very popular. Although he possessed no literary attainments, his natural good sense, combined with a deep conviction of the important office he sustained, led him to pay more attention to his sermons than, I believe, was generally imagined. Being at Bluntisham a few years ago, I remember seeing a considerable number of them in half binding. I think there

were twenty volumes, and I understood they were for his beloved daughter, Jane. But as it pleased Him, who doeth 'all things well', to take her away, Mr Feary, soon after that event, destroyed most of the volumes, so that at his decease, only three remained. There were, however, sixteen volumes more, regularly put together, all of which, except perhaps one, were secured by a piece of parchment sewed round the middle. The whole number appears to have been full twelve hundred. Almost all that have fallen under my notice contain nearly eight small octavo pages, written in long hand, and with very few abbreviations. The last I have seen is from Ez. xxxvii. 1—10, the vision of the dry bones, and is dated as preached at Bluntisham, Jan. 26th, 1817. But from comparing the number of this sermon with others I am inclined to think it should have been 1816, and that the last written sermon was preached by Mr Feary in July, 1816. Mrs Feary is of opinion, that after that time Mr Feary found himself incapable of writing his sermons as formerly."

"Few ministers, it is apprehended, who laboured under equal disadvantages with my friend, have left behind them so great a number of outlines of sermons, all regularly written, with the divisions, subdivisions and improvements. But he was a *labourer* in the Lord's vineyard; and at one period of his life read so closely, as perhaps to lay the foundation of some disorders, which occasioned him great uneasiness and pain."

His heart was tenderly attached to the people of his charge, and he said, "I have made idols of my people, and they have made an idol of me."

His friend the Rev. Mr White says, "I have been taught to revere his name from my childhood, and have received benefits and favours from him, which will render

his name dear to me, as long as I can think of it. He was the instrument of my earliest religious impressions. It was when I was about the age of twelve, that, laying his hand upon my head, he said in his peculiarly soft and affectionate manner, 'Daniel, my boy, I hope you pray.' By him I was led to devote myself to the ministry of the gospel; and how much I am indebted for his kind advice and assistance, rendered in various ways, it is impossible for me to state. He was to me a kind, affectionate, and faithful friend. I loved and venerated him as my own parent, and he ever acted towards me as a father. I never knew or heard of any one who so fully sustained the character of the friend and father of the people of his charge. In the pulpit and out of it, he was all affection and mildness; and I have always considered that his great success was principally, under God, to be attributed to his peculiarly affectionate manner of enforcing the gospel. I confess that with all the veneration I feel for his character, I have sometimes been at a loss to account for the extraordinary attention his ministry excited. At one period, many of his hearers came from eight or ten miles' distance, and the village of Bluntisham at that time presented to the view, on Lord's days, a novel and impressive scene. The early hour at which many of the hearers began to arrive, the deep interest that appeared to be taken in the service of the sanctuary, and the powerful exercise of Christian love and tenderness between the pastor and his people, were calculated to make a deep and salutary impression on the mind of the most indifferent spectator. And I have no doubt but many who have witnessed these scenes have secretly said, 'This people shall be my people, and their God my God.' Never did our friend appear so great as on these occasions,

for then he appeared as the father and friend of his people; every one was anxious to obtain a look, a shake of the hand, the promise of a visit to preach at a neighbouring village, etc. But I feel it impossible to do justice to the interesting subject—when I begin I know not when or where to leave off." Mr Audley tells us "that the above is not the language of hearsay, but of one brought up in Bluntisham, who speaks what he knows, and testifies what he has seen."

The following—'Conclusion'—was drawn up by Mr Newton Bosworth, the well-known schoolmaster of Merton Hall, and afterwards of Llandaff house, Cambridge, to whom so many of our fathers—the boys of that generation—went to be educated in the second decade of the present century.

"The preceding sketch of Mr Feary's life, imperfect as it is as to one important period—from 1804 to 1816—of it, will have enabled the reader to form a pretty correct estimate of his general character. It may not be improper, however, to bring the principal features of it more distinctly into view, especially as, in his own Narrative and Memorials, from which the facts of his history have been chiefly extracted, we could not expect to find him speaking of himself, as others, who observed his conduct and enjoyed the benefit of his labours, would be induced to think and speak concerning him. While the energy of Christian principle would urge him onward in his course, the influence of Christian humility would prevent him from recording, and even from perceiving, those excellences which his friends could not fail to recognise, and may be permitted, with gratitude to the author of them, to admire and applaud, while they endeavour to imitate them. The slightest attention to the preceding account cannot fail,

I think, to have convinced the reader that Mr Feary was in many respects, an extraordinary man. The moral reformation which, by the blessing of God, he effected in his native village, and its neighbourhood, and which must have afforded him, in the retrospect, unspeakable delight, is an event to which under all its circumstances not many parallel cases can be adduced. Without education, except in the slightest elements of it,—without influence, except what naturally accrued to him from the very efforts he employed and the success which attended them,—without forwardness and vanity, for he rather shrank from than courted the publicity which awaited him,—he produced a most remarkable and permanent change in a great part of the population around him; commencing his labours without a single follower, continuing them, with an ardent, yet well-tempered zeal, amidst alternate hopes and fears, successes and discouragements, and ending by the formation of a flourishing church and congregation—the latter amounting to seven or eight hundred persons. If, as the Scriptures assure us, 'he that winneth souls is wise,' the claim of Mr Feary to the character of a wise man cannot be disputed. The success which during a long course of years, attended his ministerial exertions, was very great. The deep sense he entertained in his own mind of the importance of religion, the love he bore to the Saviour and to the souls of men, excited him to labour 'in season and out of season,' for the spiritual benefit of his fellow-creatures. His natural endowments peculiarly fitted him for this office; kind, tender and affectionate; cheerful and even lively in his disposition; attractive in his manners, and sincere in all his professions; he seldom failed to convince those to whom he addressed himself, whether privately or in public, that "he sought not theirs,

but them," and was animated by no other desire respecting them than to promote their highest good. If to pursue the best ends by the most appropriate means, be a mark of wisdom, the claim of Mr Feary to that quality, on this ground also, will be allowed with equal readiness. No end can be superior to that of promoting the glory of God, by directing men to Him who died to save them. 'Patriots have toiled, and in their country's cause bled nobly;' but he who devotes his life to the sublime purpose of instructing the ignorant, and of showing unto men the way of salvation, acts more nobly still. Such were the ends Mr Feary had in view; and how he sought to obtain them, has in a great measure been shown."

"There are many situations in which qualifications different from those which Mr Feary possessed, would appear to be requisite for acceptance and success; but in the particular sphere in which he moved, and amid the circumstances which in succession presented themselves to his notice, it is not easy to imagine any combination of qualities more fitted than those which he displayed, for the attainment of the great object which filled his mind, and called forth all his prayers and his exertions. Had he employed much of his time in scientific and literary pursuits, it is highly probable, from the activity of his mind and the clearness of his understanding, that he would have made a respectable proficiency in human learning, and that these attainments might have been turned to good account in his ministerial capacity."

"But, while thus occupied, time would have been lost; and the case was urgent. Those who needed his instructions and warnings, were swiftly passing along towards an eternity for which they were ill prepared. He therefore felt himself impelled, by compassion for their souls, to

rouse them to a sense of their condition, and urge them to seek salvation and peace. Having felt 'the love of Christ,' 'and the power of the world to come,' he was constrained, "by a sense of that love and that power to imitate, and make strenuous exertion in the cause of, his Divine Master. Not that he neglected the cultivation of his talents, whenever the demands of more pressing and important duty would allow him time for that object. He had an insatiable thirst for knowledge of almost every kind; he accumulated by degrees a valuable library; and read with greediness everything of value which came in his way. He studied his Bible with great attention; not with partial views, or merely in detached passages and insulated texts, but in a course of connected and discriminating perusal; and although he made no pretensions to literature or criticism, in the strictness of their acceptation, he diligently availed himself of every assistance within his reach, in exploring the Sacred Writings; and derived great advantage from consulting many of those valuable expositions and other theological works, with which our own country and language so happily abound. He was also well acquainted with some of the principal authors in various other departments of English literature. In short nothing that appeared in nature, nothing that occurred in life, nothing that he observed in himself or others, was indifferent to him; all was made to contribute to the increase of his mental stores—all was consecrated to the service of the sanctuary, and brought, as occasion offered, to bear on the object to which his life was devoted."

"The caution and prudence which he manifested in the outset of his career, as a Christian and a teacher of Christianity; the absence of everything like arrogance

and display in the prosecution of it; the readiness and discretion with which he adapted himself to novel and unlooked-for circumstances; the simplicity of aim which appeared in his whole deportment at this crisis, were highly honourable to his character and favourable to the success and stability of his purpose. The most zealous advocates of regularity and prescription, it may be supposed, would have little or nothing to urge against a series of measures so conducted, in which, if in their estimation any evil were combined, the good so greatly overbalanced it. Though educated in the Established Church, and warmly attached to it for some time after he began to think seriously on religious topics, he did not, as is well known, remain in her communion. Partly by adopting, from the necessity of the case, the practice of dissent, and partly from an examination of its principles, he became and continued through life a firm and consistent Nonconformist; yet his friends whom he left never suspected his integrity, or denied him the credit of having acted from honourable and conscientious motives. As a preacher, Mr Feary was deservedly popular. His style of preaching was colloquial, rather than elaborate; and was well calculated to convey instruction to the understandings of his hearers and to make an impression on their hearts. His action in the pulpit was easy and graceful, his voice melodious, and his whole delivery unusually happy. In his ministerial capacity, there was an admirable union of the most inflexible fidelity and the tenderest affection. He never 'shunned to declare the whole counsel of God,' however unpalatable it might be to any of his hearers. His attachment to what he conceived to be TRUTH, would never suffer him to conceal his sentiments; but his manner of stating and defending

them was so modest that it never gave offence to those who differed from him. It was not often, however, that he touched upon disputed points in the pulpit; his whole soul seemed to be absorbed rather in pointing sinners to the Lamb of God, and in enforcing practical religion, than in the confutation of speculative errors." In the opening of his addresses he usually considered the scope of the passage which he chose for his text, the circumstances which gave rise to it, the connection in which it stood to the context, the doctrine which it taught, or the duty which it enjoined; on these points his statements were clear, judicious and instructive; but it was in the *application*, as it is called, of his sermons, in his appeals to the consciences of his hearers, that he was more especially interesting and impressive. When he warned the impenitent, or roused the careless, or stimulated the slothful, or called back the wanderer; when he encouraged the timid, or confirmed the wavering, or comforted the distressed; when he directed the convinced sinner to the Lamb of God, or the self-condemned to the hope of pardon through the blood of Christ; when he spoke of rest to the weary and heavy-laden, or pointed to the heavenly inheritance and the crowns of glory which await the faithful; it was then that his countenance beamed with an unwonted energy which testified the intensity of his own emotions and the earnest desire he felt for the everlasting benefit of all his hearers. They, on their part, listened to him as to a man who meant what he said, felt what he expressed, and practised what he preached. In paraphrasing and expounding the Scriptures he particularly excelled; although in his manner of reading them there was nothing remarkably striking. No part of his pulpit exercises appears to have been more ac-

ceptable or more useful than that of exposition, to which he frequently resorted on a Lord's-day evening. His prayers were truly excellent—copious, fervent, spiritual and humble."

"By a due admixture of the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel, he preserved his hearers from Pharisaical pride on the one hand, and Antinomian licentiousness on the other." Though he zealously inculcated the important truth that we are justified in the sight of God only through faith in Christ, he never failed to urge, with equal earnestness, that faith without works is dead; nor did he suffer his hearers to forget that the gospel was intended to produce holiness, as well as to secure peace; to renew in man the lost image of God, as well as to preserve him from eternal death; to make him a "partaker of the Divine nature," as the only means of fitting him to enjoy the Divine presence for ever. In his preparation for the pulpit, Mr Feary was far from being satisfied with a slight attention to his subject. He generally wrote out the introduction at full length, or nearly so, and very correctly stated the heads, subdivisions and topics of improvement, of which he intended to treat in his discourse, together with the leading observations to be introduced under each; leaving himself, however, at liberty to make use of any thoughts or suggestions which might arise at the time of delivery; a method which Fénélon and other eminent men have considered to be most conducive to impression and effect in public addresses.

But preaching, although a most important, is not the only, nor always perhaps, the most effectual means of usefulness which the pastor of a church possesses. Much may be done by personal intercourse, frequent and affectionate, between a minister and his people. Of this kind

of intercourse Mr Feary supplied a striking example. The habit of it indeed constituted one of the distinguishing features of his character; and it may be doubted whether the great success which attended his labours is not to be ascribed, under God, more to his diligence and tenderness in this respect than even to his preaching. "The loveliness of his deportment to his people will not be easily forgotten. He had a talent for insinuating religious truth into their minds by conciliating their esteem, winning their affections and fixing their attention. His temper was so amiable, his conduct so gentle and his concern to do good so apparent to all, that even persons indisposed to religion would receive instruction from him pleasantly, and in some such instances it was received effectually. To the poor of his flock he was especially attentive, and on many occasions he has been known to leave the society of his more opulent friends to visit *them*. Indeed it was his general practice, when he went into any of the adjacent villages to dine with a friend, to steal away in the afternoon for an hour or two on purpose to call upon his poor friends to converse with them on spiritual subjects, which he would do in the most simple, artless and affectionate manner. If he found any of them in distress, he was sure to devise some plan for their relief; not unfrequently did he relieve them out of his own pocket; and when this was not the case, he would appeal to the liberality of his friends. He always took great delight in promoting the spiritual welfare of his young friends, who frequently flocked to his house on a Lord's-day evening, to enjoy his edifying conversation. He often told them that upon their conduct and exertions depended the prosperity of the cause, when he should have left the world."

That such a man should acquire influence in a society which he so faithfully and affectionately served is perfectly natural; but though this influence was at length considerable, he never perverted or abused it; he never employed it to 'lord it over God's heritage,' or claimed any dominion over the faith of his people. Indeed, if such had ever been his intention, he took the most unlikely method to accomplish it; for he continually inculcated, both in preaching and conversation, the most dignified, liberal and independent principles. Convinced of the personal responsibility of every man for his own sentiments and conduct, and of his consequent right to freedom of enquiry and judgment, and knowing for himself the value of intellectual independence, Mr Feary never wished for a moment to deprive others of a privilege which he himself estimated so highly. "To the law and to the testimony," he wished every sentiment he uttered to be brought for examination; and while he pressed upon his people most earnestly the necessity of an interest in Christ, and the importance of eternal things, he exhorted them to 'search the Scriptures' for themselves, to think for themselves, and, with application by prayer to the fountain of grace and illumination, to judge for themselves whether the truths he delivered to them were so or not. Still his influence in the congregation, to a great extent, was inevitable; what he did not assume his people most freely yielded to him; and thought themselves happy under his inspection and care. Thus he ruled most entirely in their hearts, and swayed over them a sceptre of love. He thought, he acted, he read, he prayed and preached for the whole of his hearers; and all were well satisfied. If the meeting was to be enlarged, he was to project the plan: if a Sunday School was to be formed, he was to be

the leader: if poor friends were in distress, he was the man to whom they were to repair for advice and relief. Whatever difference of opinion might subsist among any of his hearers in matters relating to the cause, all were well satisfied with his superintendence."

"His general knowledge was varied and extensive; and, as much of it related to matters of business and the common affairs of life, his friends frequently sought his judgment in their own concerns, and seldom repented regulating their conduct by his advice. He was ever ready to listen to them; he sympathised with them in their sorrows, participated with them in their joys; and was highly delighted whenever it was in his power to render them any service. He was remarkable also for the facility with which he could transfer his attention from one person and subject to another." "Whether he was engaged with the builder, farmer, gardener or tradesman, he never was at a loss; but could always adapt his conversation to his circumstances, so as to instruct, or receive instruction from, those with whom he conversed."

"He was an ardent friend to civil and religious liberty; detesting bigotry and intolerance wherever he met them, and by whomsoever they were displayed. If ever he was in danger of being betrayed into any transgression of the limits of moderation and decorum, it was on this topic: so strongly were his feelings excited when any instance of oppression or persecution was announced to him, that he could scarcely find language to express his detestation of it. For a short time, indeed, at one period of his life, as he himself confesses, political and other speculations produced an unhappy effect upon his mind, and diminished the ardour of his spiritual feelings; an effect which is sure to occur, whenever any inferior object or pursuit is

allowed to encroach upon that station which things of the highest interest ought to occupy alone. This consideration appears not to have been overlooked by Mr Feary; for to his honour it may be remarked that, in after life, how warmly soever he might continue to feel, and at times to express himself, when he thought the interests of liberty were endangered or attacked, the spirituality of his mind suffered no depression, his ministerial and pastoral assiduity no check, and his preparation for a future world no interruption. So strong and so dominant was the religious principle in his heart. To the concerns of the present state he gave that kind degree of attention which they appeared to deserve;

'But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.'

In some men the assertion of independent principles is often accompanied with the practice of oppression; and the liberty they allow is in the inverse ratio of that which they claim. In Mr Feary the love of liberty was a genuine sentiment, prompted by benevolence, and carried out into practice. Hence arose the kindness with which he treated the poor of his flock, his domestics and dependents, and his liberality towards all who had intercourse with him. His conduct, in other respects, was as independent as his principles; nothing could induce him to act in opposition to the dictates of his conscience and his conviction of duty. Though he stood alone, he would maintain the 'cause of right;' and persevere in any course he was assured, on careful enquiry, was consistent with the will of God. Such a union of firmness with modesty, of humility with zeal, of ardent feeling with steady perseverance, of genuine piety with liveliness of temper, as Mr Feary exhibited, is not often presented to our view."

"During a period of thirty-five years did this excellent man preside over the church and congregation with fidelity and love; and the greatest harmony ever subsisted between himself and them. In that time were admitted into the church about two hundred and seventy members, the greater part of whom received their first religious impressions from his ministry. Such a number, in so long a period, would not be deemed extraordinary in some situations, where the church was previously organized and the congregation large; but here it should be recollected, there was not only no church when Mr Feary began his labours, but no materials of which to form one, until some years afterwards; and it is somewhat remarkable, that one of the persons to whom he first read a sermon of Mr Whitfield's, was nearly the last member he received into his church."

"Although Mr Feary was domestic in his pastoral, as well as his personal habits, spending his days almost entirely among his own people, and therefore seldom exchanged services with other ministers in the neighbourhood, yet he ever manifested towards them a spirit of the greatest cordiality, and was beloved and esteemed by them in return. He also enjoyed the friendship of several eminent men, who became acquainted with him in his seclusion, duly appreciated his worth, and spoke of him in terms of the sincerest regard. Among these may be noticed the late Rev. Andrew Fuller, of Kettering; the Rev. Robert Hall, of Leicester, who resided at Cambridge during the most active period of Mr Feary's life; the Rev. W. Jay, of Bath; and Dr Gregory, Professor of Mathematics in the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich."

"In estimating the value of a character, much con-

sideration is due to the situation and pursuits of him who sustains it; and in comparing the different occupations of mankind, none, in the eye of a Christian, will appear to be of superior, or equal importance to that of him who seeks to prepare his fellow-creatures for an eternal world. Many persons have run a more splendid career of worldly glory, many have been distinguished by higher endowments and brighter talents; but if a life of piety and benevolence, of activity and usefulness in the church of Christ, be entitled to commendation and remembrance, few indeed have a greater claim to them than this amiable and excellent man. All who feel an interest in the prevalence of true religion, will be thankful to God for what he has wrought by him: will rejoice in the good which he has been the instrument of effecting; and will delight to contemplate its consequences as likely to extend to future generations in this world, and to everlasting ages in the world to come."

Several sentences in this chapter were extracts from a letter written by Mr Matthew Tebbutt, of Bluntisham, to Mr Bosworth.

Inscription on a tablet in the Meeting-House at Bluntisham. By Mr Newton Bosworth.

In the adjoining burial-ground are deposited
the remains of
THE REVD. COXE FEARY,
Thirty-five years the faithful Pastor of this Church,
which, under God,
was raised by his instrumentality,
nurtured by his care, and instructed in divine things,
alike by his preaching, and his example.
Having learned in early life the value of religion,
and experienced its efficacy to purify the heart,
and lead the soul to God,
he was prompted by that love which the gospel inspires,
to diffuse among his friends and neighbours
the blessings he had himself received.
His success was great,
and his rejoicing on account of it, sincere.
By a life of zealous and benevolent exertion
in the cause of Christ, and for the good of souls,
he endeared himself
to a numerous congregation,
who here record their gratitude for his labours,
and their affectionate veneration
for his memory.
He died on the 22nd day of April, 1822,
in the 63rd year of his age.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Mr Coxe Feary.

Mr Coxe Feary must have been a loveable man. He had the milk of human kindness in his nature. His genial disposition, so kindly, so gentle, and his affable manners expressing these qualities so simply, made him a general favourite. The respect people bore to him was swallowed up in their love. It is pleasant to contemplate the farmer pastor: contact with nature in the field with his farm labourers, kept him in touch with the rural congregation. Their anxieties were his, as were their hopes. A good seeding, a dry hay time, a fine harvest, were a joy to him and to them. Many a time has the homely pastor smelt the sweet breath of the kine in the pasture or the straw yard, and watched them chewing the cud of content, a satisfied look has come over his face, as his fingers felt the soft well-filled coats of his fatting stock, or regarded his sleek sleeping pigs. Many a spring morning has burst upon him, when with joy he has listened to the singing of the birds, and heard the lowing of the cattle expectant of food and attention; has been refreshed by the sparkles of dew on the tender herb, and the delicious suggestion of odour from the dampened mould. In the evening he has watched the cows returning again, lowing as they come; and listened to their lazy crunching of the sweet hay in

the stall, as they yielded to the milk-maid their rich burden. The sight of the chased lark seeking his protection touched his heart. The budding trees—nature teeming with life and beauty—the harvest field, full of activity and the promise of a speedy harvest home—all awake his fancy and stir his feelings. He carried a critic's eye up the straight even furrow, left by the ploughshare, and it rested on the row of shining rooks following—doing good work. The smooth rolled barley ground, with the fresh shoots of the corn pushing through the soil after the warm April showers, gratified him. He took pride in the clean stubble, discovered after harvest, and in the well hoed field of roots. In these respects Mr Feary was most suitable for the position his Christian character and aims qualified him to fill at Bluntisham. He was the chairman of the farmers' market dinner at St Ives on Mondays and took his part in parish work. His father and mother lived in the same house their son afterwards inhabited. They took their son Coxe to the church to be baptized, and from the register we learn that their names were Benjamin and Elizabeth Feary. It was this lady who being deaf made the pulpit stair her "coign of vantage" for hearing her son speak. Mr Coxe Feary tells us that when he was a boy he did the work on the farm that boys can do. His family appears to have lived in the parish from the early part of the seventeenth century. The house in which Mr Coxe Feary was born, and in which he died, is the first on the left of the road which leads to the village of Bluntisham out of the St Ives and Earith high road. It now belongs to the grandsons of Mr Coxe Feary, Mr Feary's daughter Naomi having married her first cousin once removed, Mr Stephen Feary, the grandson of the minister's only brother, whose son

John was the said Stephen's father. This house fronts the rectory grounds which are on the opposite side of the road. It is conveniently near the Meeting-house which stands a little higher up the road on the opposite side. We must go into the garden behind this house which he owned as well as inhabited. It is a pleasant garden and bears evidence of the good taste of him who planned it. Here are the gravel walks which Mr Feary laid out and the lawn which he laid down. These evergreen shrubs and trees were chosen and planted by him, and the forest trees overshadowing the arbour are also his planting,—all done by clever hands, prompted by a heart in love with its work. The summer-house on its low raised mound was his handiwork, in its bower of trees, with its opening to the sunny south, its pleasant view of pasture and river, and beyond an extensive gently rising landscape of rural fields and villages, marked by the church spires of Holywell and Over. It was from this summer-house that Mr Coxe Feary addressed his neighbours and friends in the early times before the barn was used—they gathered on the grass plot around and in front of the low mound on which he stood to declare the goodness of Jesus Christ.

When Mr Simeon of Cambridge preached at Mr Feary's he began the service at five o'clock in the morning; he took up his position where the pump now stands at the back of the house, the doors and windows of which were open, and the overflow of the rooms and passages stood round him in the court which divides the house from the garden. This service impressed the people and good effects followed.

Mr Feary had one brother—Stephen, who married a sister of Mr William Prentice. He lived in Sutton fen and attended the ministry of the Rev. Thomas Robinson of

Mepal Church, who afterwards removed to Leicester: he was the author of "Scripture Characters." Mr Stephen Feary was greatly concerned at his brother's dissent—it would bring disgrace upon his family,—and when he finally left the Establishment and became a preacher and a settled minister, it must, he thought, bring financial failure upon him. But after a time he changed his views on these matters, put a different relative value upon things, and eventually joined his brother's church at Bluntisham. Henceforth he will be a regular worshipper at the meeting there. His daughter, Mrs John Ilett, said, "My father had a few books and *read them*;" of these his family has preserved Robinson's "Scripture Characters," and "Scott's Bible," which he took in parts, as they were issued.

Mr Coxe Feary was twice married. His first wife was Miss Elizabeth Potto, of Earith, who lived only twelve months after their union.

In November 1798, his second marriage took place. The lady was Mrs Jane Bosquain, widow of John Bosquain, esq. of St Ives, Huntingdonshire, whose family were French Refugees in 1684. Her maiden name was Shortland, a Nonconformist family at Rowell in Northamptonshire. Only one daughter survived her parents—Naomi—afterwards Mrs Stephen Feary. An old friend of Mr Feary mentions in a letter Mr Feary's strong disapprobation of, and dislike to, all clerical badges, titles and distinctions; "it was his wont, warmly to exclaim in reference thereto, 'Never will *I* be styled, or nicknamed *Reverend*, for reverend and holy is *His* name, and it shall not be *mine*'."

There are two matters of interest in Mr Audley's "Memoirs of Mr Feary" which must not be omitted. Both relate to his Baptism. He tells us "that although

Mr Feary became a decided Baptist, and, as might be expected, the greater part of the church gradually united with him in that sentiment; yet there was nothing rigid either in him or in them. The church was open for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and Pedo-Baptists were received into its communion with the greatest cordiality." The other paragraph is concerning Mr Baron, who performed the ceremony. "He was pastor of the Baptist Church at Cottenham, in Cambridgeshire. He was born at Soham, and when a boy was acquainted with Mr Fuller," of Kettering, "whose superiority of mind to all the other boys with whom he associated, was evidently manifested. Mr Baron became a member of the Independent Church at Isleham, and was called by that church to the work of the ministry. After preaching some months to the church at Cottenham, with great acceptance, he was invited to be their pastor, accepted the invitation, and was ordained July 2nd, 1783."

The old meeting-house at Cottenham was the place in which those excellent men, Messrs. Holcroft and Oddy, preached, and their pulpit is still preserved; but before Mr Baron's ordination, as it was out of repair and too small for the congregation, the present meeting-house was erected. But there was such a continued increase of hearers, that the new meeting-house was three times enlarged, and considerable numbers were added to the church. Mr Baron was one of Mr Feary's early associates, and to the day of his death, Nov. 7, 1807, he was highly esteemed by him, and by his friends at Bluntisham, both as a Christian and a minister of Jesus Christ." His great talent lay in village preaching, there he was quite at home, and was exceeded by few in the county. In token of the interest Mr Feary took in the people of his flock we record the

fact that after the Sunday luncheon at the inn, etc., the farmers and their wives were accustomed to gather in Mr Feary's sitting-room, where he would converse with them till afternoon service. The room was often crowded.

There is an interesting entry by Mr Feary in his diary memorials, "May 8, 1786. This day found myself much exercised about my temporal affairs, which very much embarrassed me, not seeing any probable source of relief to answer my present demands. In my distress, I retired to the Throne of Grace, spread my case before the Lord, and was enabled to plead his promise and faithfulness to his children. To his glory I record it, he heard and answered me in the day of my distress, by sending me a supply from a friend from whom I had no expectation. 'Thus in the mount of the Lord, his gracious hand shall be seen.'" Doubtless it was in reference to pecuniary embarrassment at this time that his brother's remark was made which rendered poor Mr Feary "extremely uncomfortable in his mind;" he chronicles the remark in his diary on the 19th May, "he believed I should, through my foolishness, bring myself to poverty." This was said in reference to his turning preacher. But he never wanted, and was enabled to keep things together, maintain himself and his family respectably, and leave a nice little property to his only surviving child, Naomi.

Mr Coxe Feary was buried in the meeting-house ground. On the tombstone is the following inscription composed by Mr Matthew Tebbutt—"Here mingle with the dust the mortal remains of the founder of this Cause—the excellent Coxe Feary; whose amiable temper, various knowledge, and agreeable manners, commanded universal esteem; while his affectionate solicitude to promote the welfare of his flock, endeared him to them while living,

and has embalmed his name in their memory now he is no more. He died 22nd April, 1822, aged 63 years."

The following obituary notice of Mr Feary is believed to have been written for the county newspaper by his friend Mr Matthew Tebbutt:—

"Died a few weeks ago at Bluntisham in this county the Rev. Coxe Feary, who was for many years a highly respectable and eminently useful minister of a numerous and flourishing church and congregation of Protestant Dissenters in that Village. Few men have laboured in the cause of God with more zeal and perseverance than he did, or have more faithfully and affectionately discharged the solemn and important duties of the ministerial office. The private as well as the public character of this excellent man was truly admirable, being one continued exhibition of all those eminent virtues and lovely qualities, which dignify elevate and adorn human nature. Such was the urbanity of his manners, the goodness of his heart, and the unaffected sweetness of his disposition, that he never failed to obtain the warm regard of all with whom he was acquainted. Although Mr Feary was eminent for the gentler graces, and for a mind possessed of the most delicate and refined sensibility, he was by no means destitute of those solid principles of action which are the foundation of moral excellence. His mind was too deeply imbued with love to God and with good will to men, ever to permit him to be led astray by any hopes or fears from the path of rectitude and duty. It was this rare and happy union of whatever is amiable and gentle with the strictest integrity, and the greatest inflexibility and decision, in which the distinguishing excellence of his character consisted. The ruling passion of his heart was love. This generous and powerful principle it was which taught *him*—in imitation of that great and glorious Being who sends His rain on the just and on the unjust and whose tender mercies are over all His works—to

discover the utmost benignity towards all his fellow-creatures around him. In reviewing his whole character, as developed by his uniform conduct it is obvious that he was one of those rare specimens of human nature which approach as near to a state of moral *perfection* as it is possible for man to attain, in the present *imperfect* state. The last two or three years of the life of this *good* man were embittered by a series of bodily affliction and distress, but the happy moment at length arrived which terminated all his troubles and introduced his happy spirit into the regions of immortal life and joy."

CHAPTER XXV.

Selections from the Bluntisham Church book.

We confine these to the Pastorate of Mr Coxe Feary.—

Elizabeth Feary of Bluntisham, mantua maker, and the sister of C. Feary, the pastor of the church, was admitted on a profession of faith in Christ Jesus, on the 16th September, 1787, was baptized on the 13th May, 1792. After a life of usefulness, as a Christian and a member of the church, she died much lamented by her friends and the poor of the church and congregation on the 2nd October, 1807. She was married to Mr Asplan, one of the deacons of the church.

Thomas Ratford, of Fendrayton, Cambridgeshire, Dairyman, was admitted Nov. 15th, 1787. When he joined the church he gave the following account, viz.: He was induced by a neighbour to come to Bluntisham as a matter of curiosity to hear a boy preach: on entering the barn he found his attention arrested by the novelty of the scene, and his mind was very much impressed with the hymn, which Mr Asplan was reading. It was that hymn 'Broad is the road that leads to death, and thousands walk together there, while wisdom shows a narrower path, with here and there a traveller,' etc. This produced such severe reflections upon his past sinful and wicked conduct, as to fling him into inexpressible horror, and distress of

mind, he looked upon himself as a monster of wickedness, neither fit to live nor die; thus burdened with guilt, and tormented with the fear of Hell, he was under such temptation to destroy himself, that he went to a pond with full purpose to put an end to a life, too miserable to be sustained. But God who is rich in mercy, at the moment he gave up all for lost, graciously appeared for him, by delivering him from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. He died suddenly on the 10th Dec., 1813, aged 84 years, after making an honourable profession of the gospel nearly thirty years.

1788, May 15. James Green, of Swavesey, Cambridgeshire, Shoemaker, admitted.

1788, May 15. Chas. Cole, of Swavesey, Cambridgeshire, Farmer, was admitted on a profession of faith.

1788, May 18. Mary Finch, the Wife of Edward Finch of Houghton, Labourer, admitted.

1788, June 15. James Ingle, of Over, Camb., Farmer, admitted.

1788, Elizabeth Cole, the Widow of Wm. Cole, of Bluntisham, Schoolmaster, admitted.

1788, Elizabeth Royston, the Widow of Mr Royston, of Woodhurst, Farmer, admitted: she was called by divine grace under the ministry of Mr Venn of Yelling.

1789, May 4. Ann Shepperson, the Wife of Wm. Shepperson, of Ramsey, Farmer, admitted: after an honourable profession of the gospel, she died Dec. 12th, 1802, full of divine consolation in the Lord.

1790, Dec. 24. Hannah, the Wife of Henry Kent, of the Parish of Earith, Gentleman, admitted. She was a woman remarkable for her good sense, amiable disposition, benevolence of heart, and zeal for the cause of God.

1790, Dec. 24. Elizabeth, the Wife of John Bell, of Earith, Fowler, admitted.

1791, June 9. Ann Christmas, the Wife of J. Christmas, admitted. Died Nov. 1804.

1791, Dec. 1. John Nunn, of the parish of Over, Camb. Farmer, admitted, after giving a most pleasing and edifying account of the Lord's gracious dealings with him, and of the reasons of his withdrawing himself from the church of Christ at Willingham, where he formerly stood a member. He died Feb. 1793.

1792, April 26. William Gregory, Schoolmaster, of Bluntisham, admitted.

1793, July. Susanah Willson, Wife of Thomas Willson, of Witton, admitted.

1796, Feb. 21. Stephen Feary, of Sutton Fen, Isle of Ely, Farmer, the only Brother of Coxe Feary, admitted.

1796, May 28. John Ayers, of Earith Bridge, Willingham, Camb., Fisherman, admitted, he was a most excellent Christian and entered into rest May 28th, 1807.

1796, Dec. 5. Noble Robinson, of St Ives, admitted, after relating a pleasing and interesting account of the Lord's gracious dealings with him.

1799, Jan. 16. Thomas Ulph, of St Ives, Ironmonger, admitted.

1799, Sept. Jane Feary, Wife of Coxe Feary, the Pastor of the Church, admitted.

1800, Oct. 22. Ann Jackson, of Houghton, admitted.

1800, Nov. 28. Daniel White, a very amiable youth, son of Thos. White, of Bluntisham, Dairyman: he was apprenticed at Cambridge, and while there attended Mr Simeon's church, who took great notice of him. His friend Coxe Feary procured him a situation suited to his inclinations, as Student in the Bristol Academy, where he

entered on his studies Jan. 8, 1801, under the patronage of the Bristol fund. He was baptized June 3, 1801, and preached at Bluntisham the same day for the first time; after continuing four years at Bristol, he was invited to a Baptist church, at Cirencester, Gloucestershire.

1801, Feb. 18. Jonathan Ilett, formerly of Somersham, Farmer. He died full of hope, April 8, 1805. His funeral sermon from Deut. xxxii. 9 and 10.

1802, Dec. 1. Mary Ilett, Wife of Mr J. Ilett, Farmer, in Somersham Fen, died Dec. 1814.

1803, July 31. Edward Camps, of Wilburton, Gentleman, admitted on giving a very pleasing and interesting account of the Lord's gracious dealings with him.

1803, Aug. 28. William Camps, of Wilburton, Camb. Gentleman, admitted. He with his Brother, Mr Edward Camps, fitted up a place for public worship upon their own premises, a congregation having been gathered, they chose Mr Langford, a schoolmaster in the village to be their Pastor. The two brothers applied for their dismissal on this account, Dec. 1808.

1803, Dec. 20. Ann Tebbutt, Wife of William Tebbutt, gentleman, admitted.

1804, Jan. 18. William Tebbutt, Bluntisham, gentleman, admitted. He went to Cambridge to bring his youngest son from school; leading the horse to the water, the animal rose up and came down with his forefeet upon his leg, which brought on a violent fever, of which he died, in the course of a few weeks, on the 11th Jan., 1815. The following account was found among his papers after his death and contains the substance of what he delivered to the church when he was admitted. "My first impressions of a religious nature were in reading Hervey's *Meditations*, a book which I purchased about fourteen

years ago, and such were my impressions at the time that it became a matter of serious enquiry with me—What must I do to be saved? I thought the preachers I had been in the habit of hearing were men that bore no resemblance to the author of that book. From this view of things I was resolved to go somewhere else, and in taking a view of the neighbourhood where I lived Dr Haweis was presented to my mind, accordingly I went; but the humbling doctrines of the gospel which he so eminently set forth were at first not very palatable to me who accounted myself pretty moral, who had escaped the gross vices of the age; but by constantly attending, my views on the subject altered, and I trust I can say I felt my need as well as my interest in the Saviour of mankind. In going constantly there I formed an acquaintance with several religious characters from whom I received no small advantages, and the loss of whom I regretted at leaving that country. I remember once in particular being invited to spend a sabbath evening where the conversation turned upon religious subjects and prayer, and where we did not break up until near midnight; the conversation made a lasting impression on my mind, which convinced me of the propriety of our strengthening and confirming one another in our most holy faith; thus I continued to go very comfortably until Providence by a variety of circumstances fixed my situation here. On coming to Bluntisham, not having an opportunity of hearing the gospel in the church, such were my prejudices, that I had no wish to hear it anywhere else. Consequently not attending to the means, my zeal for divine things gradually declined and wore away when it pleased God to remove my Uncle by death, and my Partner in life seemed to give a decided preference to worship in this

place (i.e. the Nonconformist meeting-house), which at first was not very agreeable to me, but finding it to be the bent of her mind it induced me to unite with her rather than be separated. Accordingly I began to come now and then, until at length I came altogether, but still I was full of doubts and fears, lest I should be wrong in dissenting from the Church of England; but in going to an ordination at St Neots, my mind was relieved from that embarrassment, that, with reading works on the subject has confirmed me in the principles of Dissent. Thus I stand this day desiring to enter into church fellowship and communion with you, hoping through divine grace to adorn my profession by a suitable life and conversation, so long as I remain among you."

1804, June 18. Francis Paul, of St Ives, admitted.

1807, June 4. Elizabeth Watts, Wife of Wm. Watts, of Bluntisham, Labourer, died Dec. 1808.

1808, Feb. 4. Mary Paul, of St Ives, admitted. In a very long letter to the church she writes that it was her "happiness to be brought up by religious Parents whose earnest prayer and solicitude was to train us up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." She also refers to the benefit she derived from the sermons of Mr Coxe Feary, especially one from Deut. xxxii. 2, and by reading the 18th chapter of Dr Doddridge's "Rise and Progress."

1811, May 11. Mrs Smith, of Colne, Wife of John Smith, Labourer, admitted. Died Jan. 1812.

1812, Ap. 2. Wakefield Cooper, of Woodhurst, Labourer, admitted.

1813, Dec. 29. William Ellis, of Colne, Labourer, admitted.

1813, Dec. 29. Thomas Bidwell, of Colne, Labourer, admitted.

1814, Mar. 3. Sarah Butcher, Colne, dressmaker, Niece of Mr Coxe Feary, admitted.

1814, Mar. 31. Ann Pedley, Widow of Wm. Pedley, of Earith, Labourer, admitted.

1814, Mar. 31. Eliz. Rignal, of Earith, admitted.

1814, June 1. Thos. Wilderspin, of Needingworth, admitted.

1814, Dec. 1. Ann Ekins, Wife of George Ekins, of Woodhurst, Farmer, admitted, upon giving the following account of her religious experience.

"Long time have I laboured under a desire of joining God's people, but have frequently been discouraged when I have heard how others have been enabled to stand up and tell the time and manner of their convictions and conversion. Were I to begin with my convictions it would be from a child—but through the follies of youth, and from being also in a situation unfriendly to religion these convictions were smothered until through the invitation of Mr Ilett's family I was brought to hear the preaching of Mr Feary, where I trust the Lord met with me, though sin and Satan have often drawn me aside. In these dark seasons I have been very much distressed. I trust, although I cannot ascertain when and how, and by what steps and advances the blessed change was wrought, yet through grace, I can say, one thing I know, whereas I was once blind and now I see myself a lost undone creature by nature unable to extricate myself, and I would cast myself entirely upon the merits of Christ's death and sufferings for redemption, whose mercy is extended to the chief of sinners, or else with such a heart as mine I dare not presume. Should I be permitted to cast in my lot with the people of God, I am well aware what watchfulness is required, and nothing draws me back so much as a fear of dishonouring the Lord, if I should be left to the propensities of my own heart. ANN EKINS."

Dec. 1st, 1814.

1815, Nov. 13. Willm. Watts, of Colne, admitted. He spoke for some time in a most engaging manner of what the Lord had done for him, saying that his religious impressions were occasioned by a dream in which he beheld a most awful display of the Last Day, when Jesus Christ shall judge the world in righteousness. His mind was so affected by the sight, that the impression terminated in a change of heart, which has been manifested by an amiable and lovely deportment for more than two years.

1815, May 3. Mary Feary, Bluntisham, mantua-maker, was admitted on giving a most interesting account of the manner in which she was brought out of darkness into the light of the gospel.

1815, May 3. Ann Giles, of Colne, mantua-maker, admitted.

1817, Feb. 27. Coxe Butcher, of Colne. Nephew of C. Feary, admitted.

1817, Dec. 4. William Weston, Somersham, Wheelwright, an amiable youth of about nineteen years of age. He gave a most interesting account of his religious views and feelings, which indicated an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile. It was truly charming.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Somersham, Colne and Woodhurst.

Mr Coxe Feary in his "Memorials" writes: "1786, May 17th. This evening I walked to Somersham, and for the *first time* preached there, from Ephes. ii. 1—3. The barn was very full, my mind was in some degree at liberty, the people very serious, and I hope the Lord was with us of a truth." For some time meetings were held in the barn, till, their numbers increasing, the friends there decided to have a regular place of worship, and we are told by Mr Audley—"Mr Feary having several members and friends at Somersham, two miles from Bluntisham, to whom he preached lectures, they were desirous of a more comfortable place than that in which they had worshipped for their occasional meetings. Ground therefore was purchased, and a very neat meeting-house erected, which was opened in the spring of 1812. Mr Fuller, of Kettering, preached an excellent sermon at Bluntisham the preceding evening, and the next morning a very encouraging one at Somersham, from Zech. iv. 10, 'Who hath despised the day of small things?' The congregation was so large in the afternoon, that it was thought expedient to have the service in a close. Mr Ragsdell, of Thrapston, preached from Matt. vi. 10, 'Thy Kingdom come.' The sermon in the evening was by Mr Edmonds, of Cambridge, from Psalm lxxiv. 21, 'Arise, O God, plead thine own cause.'"

It appears that the zealous Baptist minister of Needingworth, Mr Thomas Ladson, previous to this, had frequently visited Somersham and continued to do so till his death, preaching in houses opened for him. When he died, the persons who attended his services appear chiefly to have joined the Bluntisham congregation under Mr Feary. Mr Ladson was a High Calvinist, and is reputed to have said, "A man under peace has no more to do with the law than a dead man with his old shoes." This was received as though intended in the debased antinomian sense, and not in its original and Apostolic meaning—"Therefore ye are no longer under the law, but under grace."

When Mr Ladson first held meetings at Somersham, the resident clergyman was much annoyed, and summoned him to appear at the Huntingdon Assizes for holding a conventicle and creating a disturbance, but Ladson being protected by the "Act of Toleration," which had recently come into force, the petty persecution fell to the ground. The Curate's action appears to have strengthened Mr Ladson's cause, for shortly afterwards a cottage at the bottom of Church Lane was converted into a permanent meeting-house for his followers. A grave-yard attached to this meeting-house is still in existence, being probably one of the smallest in the kingdom. The "Act of Toleration" alluded to as having recently come into force was that modification of the legal disabilities under which dissenters had laboured imposed by Queen Elizabeth and by the "Act of Uniformity" and the "Test and Corporation Acts."—This "modification" became law in 1779—just ninety years after the other modifications of these Elizabethan and Stuart pena statutes, which modification was enacted in the reign

of William and Mary, and was called "*The* Act of Toleration." Before 1779 all Dissenting preachers and teachers were required to take oaths and subscribe before a general or quarter session all the Articles of Religion excepting the thirty-fourth and fifty-sixth, or neglecting to do so, were liable to the penalties of the "Act of Uniformity" and the "Conventicle" and "Five Mile Acts" of Charles II. The names of all subscribers to these Articles were required to be registered. Dr Doddridge was summoned by a clergyman for non-compliance with the provisions under the "Test Act" respecting Dissenting Teachers, but the prosecution was stopped by order of George II., who declared that he would have no prosecution for conscience sake during his reign. It was fortunate for Mr Ladson that he was protected by the new "modification" against the persecuting intolerance of the Curate.

The congregation at Somersham still continued a branch of the Bluntisham church, but in the year 1818 became a separate community. Its independence came about in this way. In that year Mr Coxe Feary was seized with paralysis, and was so ill that he was obliged to give up active work, and the church at Bluntisham had to get preaching supplies, one of whom they chose for their new minister. An earlier supply—Mr Joseph Belsher—being much liked by the Somersham part of the Bluntisham congregation, they, to the number of fourteen, requested their dismission, in order to form themselves into a separate church of the same faith and order. With this request the church at Bluntisham complied. Somersham became consequently a separate church; and having chosen Mr Belsher for their pastor, they addressed an affectionate letter to the church at Bluntisham, in which,

among other things, they say, "It would afford us pleasure, and give to the world a proof of your regard, if you would permit our esteemed friend, your pastor, to take a part in the solemnities of our Ordination, on the 17th March, 1819." Mr Feary was incapable of attending, but Mr Green (Mr Feary's co-pastor) went, and gave the charge to Mr Belsher.

Colne was another village regularly visited by Mr Coxe Feary and his friends. Meetings for prayer were held week by week in some cottage offered for the purpose. At one time these meetings took place regularly in the cottage of James Blake, a weaver.

Comparatively recently a pretty little meeting-house has been erected by the Bluntisham congregation at a cost of £225. It was opened on the 15th Dec. 1869.

The first record we have of Mr Feary's visits to Woodhurst is in his "Memorials," the diary in which for a few early years he made some entries.

"May 24th, 1786. This evening, expounded the 42nd Psalm at Woodhurst. Found my mind comfortable in speaking to the people. Many were refreshed, and made to rejoice in the Lord their God." These visits to Woodhurst were frequent and regular; the meetings were held in a cottage, and were much valued by the people. We learn from the oldest living member of the Bluntisham Church, admitted 31st April, 1829, a pleasant account of the primitive ways of the little band of earnest Bluntisham folk, who so frequently walked over to Woodhurst, to hold meetings there. Miss Gregory, the daughter of one of the mothers of the Church, for her mother, then Miss Ann Fordham, was one of the foundation members of 1786, has herself been for more than half a century a nursing mother of the church at Bluntisham. She has often heard

her mother describe the walks to and from Woodhurst on these occasions. How, after the cottage meeting was over, the little company would travel back to Bluntisham together; in the fine weather, as they went they would sing a hymn, then kneel down by the way side, while one of their number lifted his voice in prayer; then rising from their knees, they journey on, "singing as they go" a truly processional hymn, with the roads for their aisles, the stars for their lights, and the open country for their great cathedral. How sweetly the voices must have sounded to the villagers they were leaving, as the strains from the wayfarers became fainter—waning as the distance increased—or to the villagers they approached, waxing more distinct—a pleasant harbinger of their return. These pilgrims of the night remind us of the pilgrims of the middle ages, chanting their litanies as they proceeded from shrine to shrine, along the ways still bearing the name of "The Chantry." Fancy stirs us, as we walk along these consecrated ways, the air is tremulous with pleasant memories, which take the place of the sweet sounds hushed long ago.

"O! low they die on yon rich sky,
They faint on hill and field and river;
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever,
Blow, bugle, blow,—set the wild echoes flying,
And answer echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying."

In the winter, when the weather was bad, the road from Bluntisham to Woodhurst was execrable—no gravel—deep ruts—soft deep mire and puddles of water rendered it almost impassable—no fit place or time for kneeling by the way side now. We must watch, as well as

pray, all our energy needed to walk circumspectly, and preserve ourselves from falling into the sloughs, and avoid the deep ruts, and the hollows filled with mud. Sometimes the way was so bad that it seemed impassable for women—then the men would carry their wives pick-a-back, and so get them over these worst places. Thus the work was carried on. Worthy folk—they have their reward.

Sometimes Mr Feary would go to Woodhurst—a three miles walk—in the afternoon to make calls on some of the folk—sick or otherwise. On these occasions he made it a practice to take tea in some cottage selected for the purpose, and thither the neighbours would repair, each bringing some contribution to the general store; one brings a loaf of bread, another a pat of butter, someone a bit of cheese, or a little tea and sugar or new milk: one wonders what would happen if each had been moved to bring the same thing—all butter for instance—but their movings would be more discreet; then the donors would stay and partake of the gifts, and the conversation led by the Pastor, or some veteran Christian, would feed the soul, while the simple viands fed the body; and so they would go from strength to strength, hoping all of them to appear before Zion when their life's race is run. Homely, pleasant neighbourly ways these, very sensible and human. On one occasion the careful housewife brought out a towel which she spread over the minister's knee-breeches lest they should get soiled by the bread and butter and tea. As they brake bread together did not the Lord sit down with them? Truly it was a right method of remembering him in the sacramental supper. They, "breaking bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."

A circumstance, somewhat remarkable, occurred in one of Mr Feary's visits to Woodhurst, which, although he left no memorial of it was related by him many years ago, and is confirmed in all the material parts of it by another of his friends. He went to visit a sick person. Prayer was proposed, and all the persons in the house were called to be present. Amongst them was a poor washer-woman. When they arose from their knees they were all bathed in tears. The impression made on the good woman was lasting, and issued in her conversion to God. She afterwards became a member of the church, and continued to the end of life a consistent Christian. Mr Feary has been heard to mention another instance of a person converted by his prayer. It is thought to have occurred during a visit to a sick person at Woodhurst, or at some other place.

"Mr Feary having a considerable number of hearers from the village of Woodhurst, three miles from Bluntisham, a small place was built for their accommodation in 1798, and regularly vested in the hands of Trustees," Mr Coxe Feary—dissenting minister, being one of them. "Here their beloved friend and pastor preached lectures, sometimes on Lord's day evenings, at other times on week days." The friends at Woodhurst built this meeting-house themselves, and they paid for it themselves (clay-bricks and thatched), and it was to be "for the use of a congregation of protestant dissenters from the church of England to resort to for the worship and service of God." The land, twenty-two feet by fifteen, was given by "John Bletsoe," for the above purpose, "of his own voluntary will." The building itself was but twelve feet by ten, the rest of the bit of land serving for the way of ingress and egress. At one time, in order to conduct the week night

service on Thursday evenings, two farm labourers used regularly to walk over from Bluntisham, there and back six miles, after their day's work—sometimes a hard day of thrashing corn in the barn; after conducting the prayer meeting in this little meeting-house, they had their supper, and walked back to their houses, to rise early the next morning to their day's labour.

Mrs Ann Ekins, *née* Longland, who lived at Woodhurst, was a regular attendant at Bluntisham meeting, and an earnest friend of Mr Feary, she used to drive with her family to Bluntisham every Sunday, and stop the day to attend the services morning and afternoon, passing the interval in the meeting vestry. When her husband, Mr George Ekins, lay at the point of death, and she was expecting to be left with six little children—her father, Mr Thomas Longland, of Warboys, came over to see her—he had good property—was a farmer there, and hated dissent. Said he to his daughter, "If you will forsake those 'Culemites' I will provide for you as a lady, but if not, I will cut you off without a shilling!" She stuck to her "Culemites." Her father lived to change his mind, and to respect her convictions. "Culem" seems to have been the name of a man at Needingworth, and dissenters in the neighbourhood were called after him by way of reproach. One of the six little children was "John Longland," who in 1829, on 30th July, became a member of the Bluntisham church and a hearty supporter of all good works throughout a long life. Wakefield Cooper, of Woodhurst, was a member of the Bluntisham church, he regularly dispatched his children to the Sunday School at Bluntisham every Sunday—there was no Sunday School at Woodhurst in those early times—and the children went regardless of weather. His daughter,

Mrs Elsom, is still living, and at the age of eighty-two, recalls the time seventy years ago, when she was one of these children—her teachers were, Miss Susan Gregory and Miss Jane Feary, the daughter of the Pastor who died just before her father. Joseph Cooper was another of these children. John Barratt, and Hawkins, more than seventy years ago, were regular attendants at the Bluntisham Sunday School. Joseph Cooper—who yet lives to tell us, that he had a spelling-book given him at the school, and that his teacher was "Mitchel Harrison[1]," of Earith.

[1] This good man died some years ago in the United States, leaving in his will a legacy to the Bluntisham church in token of his loving memory.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The old Meeting-house Congregation in the Eighteenth Century.

The red brick walls and gables, the large square windows, with small leaden framed panes of glass, forming the outside—the heavy pillared galleries, the lofty pulpit, and high backed pews, which distinguished the inside of the old meeting-house at Bluntisham, were very dear to the old folk of Mr Coxe Feary's time in the last century. It was their spiritual home, and with some, their spiritual birth-place. In it they had met the Lord Jesus. Their souls were fed on the Heavenly manna and refreshed from the presence of the Lord. Here from the lips of their beloved Pastor, they listened to the words which fell from other lips nearly seventeen centuries ago, which had been spirit and life to generation after generation. How often, when the Sabbath morning came round, did the words of the Psalmist burst from their hearts—"I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord'; Our feet shall stand within thy gates." And the refrain, "They shall prosper that love thee." They had often "walked to the house of God in company" and "taken sweet counsel together." Let us follow the good folk of three generations ago, and repair also to the place "whither the tribes go up." So we fall in with the crowd

of worshippers, as they converge on the meeting-house, by the different roads and paths. The numbers of vehicles of all sorts, and people on horse-back, and afoot, is astonishing, reminding one of a fair. Some come on pillions, from long distances, and often through miry places—nine miles, twelve, fifteen, and one lady rides on horse-back from Parson Drove, a distance of twenty-five miles, thus travelling fifty miles in the day. Out of Sutton Fen, in bad weather, three Miss Fearys, nieces of the minister, ride, each on her horse—how else could they pass along the miry black fen roads? Mrs George Ekins drives in with her family from Woodhurst all weathers, although near upsetting in crossing the brook, and like to stick in some slough, on the gravelless cross-road. Out of Somersham Fen, comes Mr John Ilett and his family. Miss Elizabeth Vail's grandfather walks every Sunday from Chatteris, a distance of nine miles, and then there is the return journey, in all eighteen miles. Gigs, chaises, carts with springs and without, single horses, and pillions, but mostly pedestrians, collect from Colne, Somersham, Pidley, Woodhurst, Earith, Needingworth, St Ives, Over, Holywell, Fen Drayton, Fen Stanton, Ramsey, Chatteris, March, Wistow, Upwood, Sutton Fen, Somersham Fen, Witton, Houghton, Godmanchester, Abbot's Ripton, Swavesey, Manea Fen, Doddington, Warboys, Wilburton, and even from Parson Drove. And so from all parts they gather, and put up their horses at the village inns, or at some friendly farm buildings. In the winter, the red cloaks of the women brighten and warm the scene, and their black coal-scuttle bonnets aid the picturesque, they seem made to catch the wind—wonderful it is in stormy weather how bonnet and head keep together, but their connection is secured by a long dark wooden skewer. Should the hymn

book have been taken home, it returns swathed in a pocket-handkerchief and a sprig of "lad's love" with it; and doubtless somewhere, where the women are seated, there are rows of pattens. There are the men—the labourers in their best smocks, with plaited breast-plates, in their knee-breeches and gaiters, and beaver hats—perhaps some veteran still donning the old fashioned three-cornered hat. These beavers are not removed until the wearers have secured their sittings, and have leisure to attend to such trifling matters of detail, and then they are hung up on the wooden pegs that form long rows on the walls of the meeting-house below and in the galleries. In the summer, the women are in their short linseys, high waisted gowns, with balloon-like sleeves, and the men in grey worsted stockings and low shoes with buckles. Within the meeting, the men file off to one side and the women to the other. The high straight-backed pews are fast filling and the galleries are getting crowded—most of all in the afternoon. To short people, the only indication of the presence of some of the shorter members of the assembly, is the time-honoured beaver, hanging on the peg above his seat. Two lines from a hymn of Dr Watts's or Rippon's selection are given out at a time, and then sung by the congregation sitting, then two more lines, and so on; for the majority of the humbler worshippers are unable to read. There are some good voices, treble and bass, and they take the lead in the fugue tunes, which are often so intricate in their windings, that folk are apt to lose their way. Then comes the *long prayer*, when all rise and, turning round, stand to worship—the position adopted in the most ancient services. During the sermon of about an hour in length, after some of the heads and divisions have been set forth, strenuous exertions are

made by unfortunate persons overtaken by drowsiness, who, fearing sleep, ward off such an impropriety and evident loss, by standing upright. Several deaf people sit on the pulpit stairs to get the better of deafness—the minister's mother being one of them, and another the equestrian lady in her habit from Parson Drove. The table pew is the regular resort of the veterans of the congregation—relicts of the generation fast passing away. The services probably begin at half-past ten in the morning, and half-past one in the afternoon. In the interim, the wayfaring part of the congregation, who do not frequent the village inn or the houses of friends, repair to the vestry, where in winter there is a fire. Hither come some good folk, and sell to the needy food—penny loaves of bread, pats of butter, and bits of cheese, and frequently a boiling kettle and tea provide a refreshing cup—and so strength is renewed for the service in the "afterparts of the day," when they flock again into the meeting-house. When an illumination is necessary, sundry "dips" are lighted about the place and at long intervals—it is always a dangerous process—they are snuffed by fingers or snuffers, and a light is sometimes prematurely quenched. And so our great-grand-parents made holyday, and kept alive and vigorous their higher life, at least this was one valued means of doing so, and all chief purposes were answered and highest needs met. Wherein are our new "churches" and newer fashions, with their show and debt, better than these quiet old world ways? Will not their zeal and piety compare with our own?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Congregationalists.

Wiclif and his followers were the precursors of the Puritans of the sixteenth century. They were imbued with the same principles, which under different circumstances—the outcome of the experience of two centuries—developed into the opinions of the Puritans of the Tudors' and Stuarts' reigns. Wiclif gave the scriptures to the people in their own tongue; inviting thereby their individual judgment in matters of religion. He would depend less upon the Priests—wished to give the sacramental cup to the laity. He desired simplicity and purity in the doctrines and forms and teachings of the church, and laboured for a greater degree of independence for the laity in respect of religion. His ideas on these subjects were transmitted from him and his immediate followers through the Lollards, who were the living links of connection between Wiclif and the Puritans.

The Puritans strove for purity of ritual, of morals and of religion *within* the Established Church; they desired to have simplicity in the forms of worship, and in doctrine; and acknowledged the Scriptures as the sole authority for defining what these should be. There were others, who, holding these views—and so far they were Puritans—went further. They held congregational prin-

ciples—would worship apart from the Established Church —and were therefore called Separatists. Some of these were Ana-baptists, and were the ancestors of the Baptist Congregationalists of the present day; some were Pedo-baptists, and were called by the names of their leaders, as Brownists, Barrowists, etc., they were the ancestors of the Independent Congregationalists of our own time. Speaking generally, these Separatists held that religion should be neither patronised nor controlled by the State, but be let alone; they were the forerunners of our present Liberationists. The Brownists in Queen Elizabeth's reign stated their ideas on this matter with great clearness at a discussion which one of their number—Francis Johnson—held with a Puritan minister of Kent, in which the former says, on the subject of Disendowment, "The Queen may take to her own uses the Lordships and possessions of the Prelates and other clergy, which happy work, by what princes soever it is done, as certainly it will come to pass, for the Lord of Hosts hath spoken of it, it will greatly redound to the glory of God, the honour of themselves, the free passage of the gospel, the peace of the Church, and the benefit of the whole Commonwealth." He also proposes that the endowments of the Church of England should be given "for schools, universities, the upholding of hospitals, almshouses, and the like; for help of poor widows, and fatherless, and strangers, for the impotent sick and helpless of all sorts; for making and repairing of bridges and highways." He adds, "The Brownists would have these idolatrous livings returned to the Commonwealth from which they were taken. But our forward (puritan) ministers that wish the Prelates down and their livings taken from them would gladly have them for their own use. As you (Henry Jacob) have pleaded for them."

In Charles the First's reign the "Brownists" petitioned for a full and impartial toleration—for the great benefit of freedom of conscience. They asked for toleration of all "Brownists," "Puritans," "Socinians," "Arminians," "Papists," etc.

"We beseech you, give your consent, agree, vote for it—that every man may have freedom of conscience. LET THEM ALONE. We desire nothing but the truth by this freedom and connivancy. Truth will at last appear; that which is of men will be dissolved, that which is of God will continue and remain for ever! Neither will they be contented with any thing that shall be established by Act of Parliament, were it never so good. Only freedom will in time cause the truth to shine upon them."

"The matter therefore, of so great importance and consequence, we submit, leaving to your honours' profound and deep judgments, humbly requesting and imploring, again and again, that, *for the quiet of the State, for the comfort of the subject,* and *for the love of truth,* you cause and proclaim a *toleration,* that for religion *none shall be persecuted,* but *every one freely enjoy his own conscience...*" Unfortunately these just and enlightened views found no favour. The Convocation of 1640 decreed that "no person shall import or print any of the books of the Brownists, Separatists and other Sectaries, on pain of excommunication, and of being further punished in the Star Chamber." The Brownists were no insignificant sect; as early as 1580 Sir Walter Raleigh spoke of them as existing by "thousands." In 1583 Brownists and Anabaptists are freely classed together,—a natural classification, since their ideas on internal Church polity were, and are, identical, and both are suitably designated Congregationalists. The Congregationalists were joined by many Independents

and Baptists during the reign of Charles I. and the Commonwealth. The former did not generally disapprove of the connection of religion with the state, their stand was against prelacy.

At the ejectment of 1662 large numbers of the non-conforming ministers, and their flocks who sympathised with them, swelled the ranks of the Congregationalists, chiefly of that branch of them known since the time of Charles I. as Independents. They held in theory, the propriety of a state church, but would have it differently regulated. The church at Bluntisham was founded by Pedo-baptists, or Independents. Mr Feary subsequently changed his views on the subject, and practised "believers'" baptism, most of the members following his example; but it occasioned no difficulty and no change in any other respect,—each member simply carried out his own conviction, and throughout the century that has intervened no difficulty has arisen on this question. There are many other churches in our land adopting the same practice, in which Congregationalists, using one or the other, or neither form, work harmoniously together.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Mr Samuel Green.

The following memoir appeared in *The Baptist Magazine*, August, 1840:

Memoir of the late Rev. Samuel Green, by his Son, the Rev. S. Green, of Walworth.

"'The memory of the just is blessed,' and when a righteous man whom God has rendered useful is taken out of the world, it behoves survivors to preserve a record which may have the effect of inducing others to tread in his steps so far as he trod in the footsteps of Christ, and also to magnify the grace of God in him. On this account, as well as because the church has a right to everything belonging to her ministers that may be beneficial, the following memorial is presented of my late honoured father. His own memoranda furnish the materials.

"His origin was lowly, little likely to send forth a minister of talent and usefulness. Nuneaton in Warwickshire was the place of his birth, a town which in moral and spiritual cultivation is still far behind many other parts of this country. Much, however, of improvement in these particulars has been mercifully achieved there since 1770, the year in which my father was born. His parents were poor but industrious, and for the station they

occupied highly esteemed, but they were without the fear of God. As their family was large, every child as early as possible was placed at the wheel or the loom. A free-school in the town furnished to my father, up to his eighth year, the rudiments of learning; and subsequently an evening school somewhat augmented his stock of knowledge. His mind was inquisitive, his application close, and to use his own words, 'I soon became more learned than any of my father's children.' Between the ages of eight and ten years he was led to entertain great apprehensions as to his condition before God. How this subject was presented to his mind does not appear. His parents—his mother especially—regular in the discharge of the external duties of religion, were accustomed frequently to commend to his attention the word of God; so that it would not be difficult to account for this concern. The Spirit of God, even at this early age, was preparing him by such means as were within his reach for the engagements of future life. His distress was exceedingly great; he describes himself as deploring his immorality, or wishing he had many years before then been in hell, vainly imagining that he would have become familiar with his pain. What might not have been the blessed advantage to himself, and probably to others, had he then been favoured with such means of instruction as might have fully set before him the way of salvation! Children of the disciples of the Redeemer cannot too highly prize the blessing of such parentage. These impressions, however, soon wore away, and my father afterwards became a kind of ringleader among boys of his own age, and even of more advanced years. He describes himself as lost to all fear and shame, as abandoned to every vice which his age and circumstances would allow.

His conduct was the grief of his parents, especially of his mother, whose heart he conceived the Lord was now opening. They fancied he would commit some crime, at once ruining himself and involving them in pain and disgrace. He had joined a benefit club whose members aided each other in sickness; but, as is unhappily the case with many such societies, their time and money were too often spent in rioting and drunkenness. One of their number had engaged in a pugilistic contest which ended fatally; and while with the rest of the club, my father stood at the grave of his fallen companion, and listened to the reading of the office for the burial of the dead, his mind was powerfully impressed with the awfulness of the delusion cherished by expressing over such a man the hope that he rested in Christ, and would rise to everlasting life. 'My serious thoughts at this time,' he says, 'returned, yet they were not effectual to change my heart.' Some check was, nevertheless, laid upon his career. About that time the preaching of a Mr Hemmington in one of the village churches near Nuneaton was beginning to excite considerable attention. Many of the people flocked to hear him. A simple, fervid, evangelical ministration was a new thing in those days. The memory of the oldest inhabitant could furnish nothing parallel, and though the village was at six miles' distance, many, and among them some of the acquaintances and companions of my father, went every Lord's day to hear him. 'There was no small stir about that way.' Some said one thing and some another; the great number of the townspeople thought, however, that a strange whim was obtaining possession of the people, to take them so far to listen to the ravings of a man whom they considered at best but a harmless fanatic.

"Merivale church was crowded. 'Among the persons who flocked thither,' says my father, 'was a young man with whom I had been intimately acquainted. I could not tell what was now come to him; he never made his appearance among his companions, and if at any time he was seen in the street, it seemed as if he wished to get out of it as soon as possible. I thought much about him, and as I deemed myself wiser than he, I fancied if I went once to the church to hear this man, I should be able to show my friend his mistakes. With this view I ventured to go. Mr Hemmington was not that day in his pulpit. A Mr Valentine, a clergyman like-minded, addressed the congregation with great earnestness on the errors into which ungodly men fall as to religion—'There need not be, they say, so much ado about it; God is merciful,' with other things of the same kind. 'But,' added he, 'when they come to die, ask them whether they think religion important—whether there can be too much concern for the soul's salvation—whether faith in Christ be an unnecessary thing; they will then hold a different language.'

"The appeal seemed directed to me. I was exactly the individual whose language had been uttered, whose thoughts had been brought out. I cannot describe my feelings; but though it is now twenty-eight years since, the scene is fresh in my remembrance. I imagine I see the man of God in the pulpit; the people crowding in every direction, in the pews and aisles of the church; the gothic arches, the carvings, the old-fashioned seats, the walls green with mould and damp; nay, I seem as if now seated in the old gallery, and beginning with the utmost consternation to say to myself, 'What have I been doing all my life? I am mistaken; I am utterly wrong; these people are right; I must become a new man.' It seemed

then as if I had been totally blind, and that now my eyes were opened. I can never forget those moments. What surprise I felt! How it was or from whence it came, I knew not, but when the service was ended I came out of church full of astonishment, and instead of trying to convince my companion of his delusion, I viewed those who understood the things I had heard as the happiest people in the world. Persons who walked so far to hear the word of God were likely in returning to seek to benefit each other by mutual conversation; and it is pleasing to discover from my father's journal, that many of them met in the evening of the Lord's day at the house of one of their number for united supplication and for reading the Scriptures. He went to their meeting the very evening after his mind had received the impressions already mentioned. All were astonished; some hoped for the best; some were thankful; but when after a short time he began to tell how great things the Lord had done for him, he was met by cold suspicion and doubt. 'So notorious a wretch as I to be converted was to them an unlikely thing; they could scarcely believe it; as yet they knew but little of God's ways, and did not understand the language of Paul, "where sin abounded grace did much more abound."' On this part of his history my father remarks with great force, 'Wisdom is necessary in dealing with newly-awakened persons; but what good might not be expected if Christians would but imitate the tenderness, the gentleness, and affection of Christ, who feeds his flock like a shepherd, gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom. How great the unreasonableness, how irreparable the injury, of old Christians forgetting the weakness of childhood.' The impressions thus made led him as a guilty sinner to seek pardon through the blood of

atonement; the obtaining of which, while it set him free, and created a joy unspeakable and glorious, induced the conviction which never forsook him—that to the free grace of God alone he was indebted for his recovery from eternal wretchedness. 'I was sunk,' he says, 'to the lowest depths of degradation and misery—a monster of iniquity —a very devil; yet God had mercy on me; ten thousand thanks to his holy name.' The exclusive reign of divine grace in the salvation of a sinner was not with him so much an opinion as a feeling; it was one of the things embraced by his consciousness, not simply assented to by his judgment. And here I may take leave to say, though my father through his whole life utterly detested the idea of so limiting the mercy of God as not to invite all freely to partake of it, and of supposing that any obstacle prevents man's obeying the invitation but the state of his heart, he ever maintained those doctrines which are usually denominated Calvinistic. The free grace of God in conversation was his frequent theme. Early in life he married. His wife was young; her mind had been graciously enlightened; and her deep piety, her affectionate disposition and sound sense admirably adapted her for a companion to him. He soon fell, however, into great pecuniary straits and difficulties, from which there seemed no way of escape but one, against which every feeling of his heart rose in strong opposition. After struggling against these difficulties for some time ineffectually, a debt of about four pounds induced him to enlist as a common soldier into the County Militia. This body at that time assembled for a month in each year, to be trained to the military art; they were not likely, as he thought, to be called away from home. Soon afterwards, however, the French war assumed such an aspect as to put in requisition

all the forces Government could command, and my father was ordered to join his regiment, to occupy different parts of the coast as occasion might require. With a heavy heart he left home; his necessary companionship was anything but favourable to the growth of devout and religious feeling; yet he says, 'I feared and prayed, and became diligent in the use of whatever means of grace I could command, seeking from God that support and direction which were so needful at this trying season. The more my companions ridiculed my religion and persecuted me, the more I looked to the Lord; and now I cannot but thankfully adore the mercy and the power which preserved me from evil.'

"In the company in which my father was, there was another man, Edward Burton, 'to whose memory justice,' he says 'is much in arrears.' He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost; and perhaps by some he will be remembered as afterwards the humble pious pastor of a small congregation at South-hill, Bedfordshire. Mr Burton was a preacher during his soldier's life. My father's mind had been greatly exercised on the subject of preaching, previously to his assuming the red coat; the two men, therefore, one a sergeant, and other a corporal, became exceedingly intimate. Sergeant B., the elder, watched over his friend with a fatherly care, and occasionally admonished him with a brother's kindness.

"At Liverpool, my father, who had mostly attended among Baptists since his soldier's life had commenced, was about to join the church under the late Samuel Medley, from whom he received much kind and Christian attention; but at that juncture his company was ordered to a considerable distance, so that he was not privileged to put on Christ by a public profession till some time

afterwards, while encamped near Folkestone, in Kent. In the regiment there were several pious soldiers, accustomed to meet for worship under the guidance of Sergeant Burton; his absence on Lord's day led to my father's being solicited to take his place; and the church at Folkestone hearing of this circumstance, requested him to give them an opportunity of judging what were his gifts for the ministry. A point of order seems to have prevented their calling him to the work he longed for; still they agreed that 'he might preach when opportunity offered and necessity required.' His connexion with Folkestone was but short. The regiment to which he belonged was ordered to Colchester; but the want of full accordance between his views and those of the estimable minister who then laboured there, stood in the way of his receiving much encouragement. His mind was severely tried, and often did he pray that his ardent desires for the ministry might be taken away, as he had but little hope of their being gratified. 'Once,' he says, 'I came to the resolution to give up my profession of religion; but as this purpose was being settled, it suddenly occurred to me, while I was walking in the barrack-yard, that if I did so I must renounce the house of God, and no more associate with his saints; on which the snare was mercifully broken, and I escaped.' At length the regiment was ordered to Norwich. Much kindness on the part of the friends at Colchester was shown at parting, and often in his later life have I heard my father refer to his stay there, as endeared by a thousand grateful remembrances. Good was done in the church, partly through the instrumentality of the soldier-Christians; and both Baptists and Independents vied with one another in their expressions of affectionate solicitude for their welfare.

My father says, 'There was not a happier man in all the regiment than myself; for, notwithstanding my little difficulties, the Lord was with me and strengthened my persuasion that he would in due time accomplish the great desire of my soul, and enable me to preach to sinners the glad tidings of salvation. When we came within about a mile of Norwich, to which we were all entire strangers, I was thinking about preaching.' Soon after their arrival it was noised abroad, that there was a preaching sergeant among the soldiers, and he was speedily sought for to occupy the many pulpits of the city and neighbourhood. The corporal was not forgotten; and my father says, 'in a little time I was requested to preach in the vestry of the late Mark Wilks' meeting, on a Lord's-day evening. This I did, and was desired to repeat the exercise, but without any further prospect.' At East Dereham, the minister, Mr R. Denham, was declining in health; Sergeant Burton was sought to supply his place; but when on one occasion he was unable to go, Mr Wilks who was looking out for a supply, met my father in the street. Said he, 'Corporal Green, you must go and preach at Dereham.' My father resisted this unexpected proposal; but Mr W. was not a man to be refused, so that he felt constrained to apply for leave of absence, and was soon on the road to East Dereham, where he preached. He afterwards preached at Diss for the people under the pastoral care of Mr Charles Farmery. Mr Denham soon afterwards died. Mr Farmery was looked to as the adviser of the people in their affliction, and though they could only raise a salary of £20 per annum, it was deemed right by the church to request my father to take the oversight of them in the Lord. He was a soldier, however, and procuring his discharge was a

difficult affair. He could not raise the necessary sum; three or four pounds was all the Dereham people could venture to promise. My father belonged to a class of men greatly valued by the officers; it was not likely they would give him up; but he determined on making the trial. His captain readily promised he would do all he could with the Colonel to further my father's wishes. The next day my father was ordered to attend on the Colonel, who, after several enquiries, said, 'Yes, corporal, you shall have your discharge for £20.' My father bowed and hastened to his friend Farmery; the money was borrowed and the next day his discharge was procured. During his connection with the army, my father had obtained many furloughs, and walked many weary miles, to visit his beloved wife and family; but he was now delighted with the prospect of once more living with them, and of prosecuting the work dearest to his heart. He removed with them to East Dereham, but soon afterwards his wife died leaving him with three small children, all this added to the duties of the pastorate greatly oppressed him. But God was with him, and his usefulness began to appear. Soon afterwards he married a daughter of a farmer in Norfolk; and by the help of a school which for a few years was greatly prosperous, he was enabled to live.

"His ministry at Dereham continued for twenty-two years, during which the church and congregation steadily increased. The meeting-house was enlarged in 1815, and my father having given up his school labours, visited many of the villages around on Sunday evenings. In three of them small meeting-houses were fitted up. With the Independents my father was always on terms of kindly intercourse. Though a Baptist from conviction, he was

neither bigoted nor narrow. He loved, and could maintain fellowship with all who loved Christ."

At the close of 1818 Mr Green left Dereham and became co-pastor with Mr Coxe Feary at Bluntisham, where he laboured for eleven years. In the summer of 1829, while on a visit to his old friends in Norfolk, he was seized with paralysis, and in 1830 relinquished his charge at Bluntisham, and removed to Thrapstone. When his son saw him in April he was very peacefully waiting his dismissal, which happened on the 17th August, 1840.

His son says of him that he was a man of stern, unbending integrity—a sturdy saint, who carried his religion into every engagement. His preaching was exceedingly simple and earnest. He had felt the power of the gospel working an effectual change in his own heart; he anticipated this result in others only as it was explained and urged home by every consideration which affection could employ. He was of untiring activity and diligence. In early life he has been known to keep school the whole of every day in the week, Saturday afternoon and Sunday excepted—to preach twice at home on that day sermons that must have cost him much thought and application—walk three or four miles, and preach at night, then walk home, to return to the same round during the succeeding week. To this he thought himself called; and when he had such an impression, no labour was too great, no toil or sacrifice too severe. His desire was to spend and be spent in the service of God.

Mr Green died at Cambridge, and was buried in the Bluntisham Meeting-house burial ground. In the meeting-house a tablet is erected to his memory, with the following inscription. "To the memory of the Rev. Samuel Green who ministered to this congregation from 1819 to 1830 for

a time as co-pastor with the Rev. Coxe Feary and afterwards as his successor, a good soldier of Jesus Christ, upright in his conduct, loyal in his devotion to his Divine Master, fearless in his contention for the faith once delivered to the saints. He died August 17th, 1840, aged 70 years."

CHAPTER XXX.

John Edmund Simmons, M.A.

John Edmund Simmons, M.A., was the son of the Rev. John Simmons, Baptist Minister of Wigan in Lancashire; his mother lived to the age of ninety-five years and was buried in the Bluntisham meeting-house ground; to the time of her death she could see to read any print without the aid of spectacles. In speaking of her son—the pastor of Bluntisham church—she would say, "We always thought there was some'at in John." Mr Simmons married the daughter of a Church of England clergyman, she had property, and it enabled him to spend sufficient time at Glasgow University to take his Master of Arts degree. He had a brother who was minister of the Baptist Church at Olney—a clever man and well educated.

Mr Simmons was pastor of a church at Stony Stratford before he came to Bluntisham, where he remained for thirty-eight years.

His character was tenacious and independent, he was strictly honourable, upright and conscientious. He was possessed of philanthropic goodness of heart and benevolence of disposition, with a prevalent concern for the well-being of his neighbours, particularly of his own flock. These moral qualities were combined with some valuable mental ones. He had an excellent memory, and power of

concentration and took a firm grasp of subjects which engrossed his attention. These mental characteristics, with his habit of independent thought, enabled him to treat a subject by his own method, and in his own particular way. He held his opinions strongly and it was not easy to move him from them, nor was it likely he would be easily moved from them, for he had arrived at his conclusions, thoughtfully and deliberately; and his goodness of heart, his excellent mental powers and his long experience entitled his opinions to deference and respect. His course was marked by its consistency, maintaining an even balance his people could depend upon him. His theology was Calvinistic, but he was not extreme in any of his doctrinal views. He much admired and read Scotch Presbyterian Theology.

He resembled in appearance what we imagine was the type of the puritan minister of the Calvinistic school, although there was nothing morose or stern about him. On the contrary, there was a drollness with him, and frequently a quizzical expression on his features indicative of humour and much human feeling. There was a quaintness about his face and his general style which provoked curiosity and excited interest. He had the face and person and gait of a man to whom the lover of the uncommon would desire an introduction, and using it, would not be disappointed. His conversation evidenced a man extensively read, both in old literature aud in that of the present time, and well versed too in the periodicals and newspaper topics of the day. There was a curious aptness to be interested in all sorts of whimsical subjects, old world topics and oddities, and curiosities of literature. He was reserved and apparently not easily moved, yet he was possessed of a very kind heart and much feeling, which

was more easily roused than people generally supposed.

His quiet manners covered a nervousness not very apparent, but which nevertheless was there, and often lent awkwardness to a somewhat peculiar address. Notwithstanding his determination to maintain the mastery over his emotions, he was sometimes overcome, and his strong feeling shown by long pauses in his sermon, and occasionally even a burst of weeping. At times, when under deep feeling his sermons were very affecting, and powerfully appealed to his people on behalf of the truth. Holding to a sound orthodoxy on important points, he yet was fond of going into uncommon theories, and sometimes astonished friends as well as strangers by propounding some quaint theory or supporting some unusual hypothesis. There was readiness to serve, accompanied with curious awkwardness in rendering the service, e.g. some of his young people were desirous that their pastor should undertake a Bible-class for them, and at length screwed up their courage, and apprised him of their wish. He at once assented, and arranged a time for meeting. When they met he waited to hear from them what they wanted him to do, they with the diffidence belonging to their age were nonplussed, and the well-meaning pastor left, after saying he thought they wanted to say something to him.

He was very independent in his action, and took entirely his own course in his ministerial teachings and pastorate.

After a course of sermons on the Calvinistic doctrines of election, etc., which lasted longer than was agreeable to some of his people—one of them venturing in some way to give the pastor a hint of the feeling prevalent on the matter, Mr Simmons remarked that such feeling evidenced the natural depravity of the heart fighting against the

truth, and the need they had of such sermons—he should put them through another course! Some thought if the pastor occasionally exchanged pulpits with another minister, the simple fact of a change might be beneficial. He acted on this suggestion, but provided such poor exchanges that his people regretted they had made the suggestion. His preaching was always sensible and good, and he frequently displayed feeling which shewed itself in his own peculiar way. On one occasion when he preached before the Associated Ministers of the county, his sermon struck all present as one of singular force and power. Sometimes in his sermons he would make sententious remarks which were easily remembered. Referring to some persons who objected to work, excusing themselves on the ground, "that they were not brought up to it," said he, "Such folk will soon be brought down to it." He was a poor visitor. Once a humble member of his congregation said, "You see Mr Simmons is a very good man but he can't force conversation out of you." Yet he enjoyed a quiet social cup of tea at the homes of his people and shewed very sociable feelings. He would drop in at a house and the friend would say, "You'll stay and take tea with us, Mr Simmons?" "Just what I've come to do," he would reply, and the tea would be hastened to suit his early hours.

Accustomed to a very quiet life in his country house at Colne, about a mile from Bluntisham, his daily enjoyment was in a walk or in calling on some friend and driving him out with him in his pony chaise, on which occasions he would remark—that if people knew more of the beauties that laid immediately around them, they would not want to go so far away from home for their enjoyment as they now thought necessary. He took great quiet satisfaction in the rural surroundings of his drives.

Mr Simmons was buried in the meeting-house ground, and on a mural tablet within the meeting-house is this inscription, "Erected by the congregation worshipping in this place to the memory of the Rev. John Edmund Simmons, M.A., who was their Pastor 38 years, from 1830 to 1868, and during the whole of that time, by his able and varied presentation of the truth of God's word, and by a life of unblemished and unostentatious piety obtained the confident affection of his flock and the respect of the neighbourhood around. 'He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men.' He died September 5th, 1868, aged 72 years."

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Progress of the Church at Bluntisham.

This chapter is placed here because it appears better to look back, than to anticipate. From the selections from the church book, and the sketches given of the various ministers, much of what we have to tell concerning the progress of the church at Bluntisham has been told; what remains we will endeavour to give in this chapter.

Sometimes water holds in solution certain substances, the presence of which is not detected by ordinary observation, until it is manifested by the introduction of some other substance which attracts it, and then beautiful crystals are formed. A process akin to this took place at Bluntisham and its neighbourhood; some of the people, sensitive to the touch of the Spirit of God, were attracted to Mr Coxe Feary, they gathered round him, the Christian Church was formed, beautiful, because in some degree it made manifest the spirit of Jesus Christ and put on some of the white garments of holiness. As the Lord Jesus Christ sacrificed his life, that we might have an ideal church before us, Christians need offer no excuse for enthusiasm when they recognise in any community an attempt to realise this ideal. Mr Coxe Feary and his friends earnestly sought to do this, and succeeded in a good measure. The church they founded was a home for

kindred spirits, for all those who were striving to put on the Lord Jesus, and to have his "mind" within them. And it has offered a spiritual home to all such, through the century that ensued. None can tell the good it has effected or measure the benefits it has conferred. To God only are these known, and it may be that some who have passed from the little community below, to the great gathering of the church above, are telling with joy results unknown here, but revealed there, results beyond value. We all crave sympathy. To get it fully in matters of small importance is a pleasure; in affairs of greater importance, it is proportionally valuable; and on questions of vital importance, it is precious indeed. Full sympathy of soul with soul, on subjects which move the profoundest feelings of the heart, and elicit the deepest emotions, is priceless treasure. It was this highest, fullest sympathy, which this Christian community had to offer, and as one soul after another was touched by the love of God, and the grace of his dear Son, they naturally came for sympathy to those, who having had a like experience, were able to give it. What was it but the craving for full sympathy, on the most soul-stirring topics, that led the people of Bluntisham to waylay Mr Feary on his return from Yelling, that impelled them to drive or walk, twenty-four miles on the Sabbath day, or the lesser distances, in search of what their souls longed for? What but this led them to withdraw from their parish church, and frequent the conventicle, in close room, and draughty barn? It was not to their social advantage, either in position, or in gifts, or (at that time) in the respect of their neighbours. But now they have formed their little church, this pressing need is met, as far as human nature, in its imperfect sympathies, is able to meet it. "Come

with us and we will do you good," was the hearty invitation of Mr Feary and his friends. Here one, and there one, gladly responded, and entered the inner circle of the church, or joined with the congregation worshipping at the new meeting-house. So the little church was built up. Mr Feary was excellent in diffusing the Christian spirit of love amongst his people, and in attracting his neighbours by the power of his love, and the force of his Christian character, and under his pastorate, distinguished by its simplicity, and earnestness, the church and congregation rapidly increased.

His successor, Mr Samuel Green, took up the work when illness obliged Mr Feary to resign. Mr Green carried on the good work on the same lines as his predecessor. Neither had received much school learning, nor any college education, nor especial training for the ministry, but both brought to bear on the neighbourhood, what was far beyond this—characters which had been formed in the school of experience. Contact with their fellow men, in the every-day affairs of life, made them conversant with commonplace ways and needs—they knew men's habits, and ways of looking at things, and therefore knew how to help them, and to present to them God's truth. Had they not known toil—in the field—in the camp? The every-day difficulties that meet men in their struggle for gaining their daily bread—these they had experienced, and through perseverance, and patient continuance in well doing, by power of heart, rather than by force of intellect, they had achieved their position as leaders; this quality and this natural education, particularly fitted them for the pastorate of the village folk. During the three pastorates, occupying the first eighty years of the church's existence, many efforts were put forth for the advance-

ment of the Kingdom of the Redeemer—At Home—In the Neighbourhood—And Abroad. *At Home.* The old meeting-house had been built, and the land purchased, at a cost of £623 0*s.* 7*d.*, the whole paid for by the congregation. A grave-yard prepared for use; a Sunday-school formed and carried on, when such schools were far from general. The meeting-house had been twice enlarged, once in 1797, when it was increased by an addition of one-third more accommodation on the ground-floor, at a cost of £230. 10*s.* 6*d.*, and again in 1817 when a gallery was erected for the accommodation of the Sunday-school children, at a cost of £192. In 1805 a new vestry was built which cost £100. In 1810 the burial-ground was enlarged, and fenced in, at a cost of £70. *In the Neighbourhood.* We have seen how friends went over to Somersham, and Bluntisham and Colne. How the little room was built by the friends at Woodhurst, and the meeting-house at Somersham, in 1812, both in a great measure through the energy and Christian life of the church at Bluntisham. *And Abroad.* Collections were made for various good objects, far removed from their own personal influence, e.g. Mar. 3, 1805, Collected for the Baptist church and congregation at Cradley in Worcestershire, £14. 10*s.* In 1806, wishing to convert the Jews, the good friends collected £17. 3*s.*—after a sermon preached by Mr Frey, a native of Franconia. Then they collected about the same time the sum of £31. 10*s.* 6*d.* in "aid of the distressed Germans, who were reduced to poverty, and went through the calamities of war." On the 14th June, 1808, they made a collection for the church at South-hill, which amounted to £13. 2*s.*—and this same year, they collected for a church in Cornwall £17. 9*s.* 6*d.* In 1812 Mr Feary makes a memorandum in the church

book, "Collected for ministers, and meeting-houses, in about eighteen months, the sum of £91. 5*s*."—Another entry made by Mr Feary under the year 1816, "The church and congregation collected for the French Protestants, who (since the abdication of Napoleon, and the placing the Bourbons on the throne,) have been most shockingly and barbarously persecuted by the Catholics;—we sent them £15. 2*s*. 6*d*."

Although these entries all occur during the first Pastorate, it appears from an entry made by Mr Green, in 1824, that the debt contracted in the building of the new gallery, behind the pulpit, was not paid off till April of that year, and at the same time that this old debt was cleared, "The new wall at the back part of the Meeting-yard was built, and paid for. This is deemed a great mercy by the church." Mr Green makes the following entry: "April 20th, 1826, This day was held by the church as a day of prayer and supplication to God, that he would mercifully bless us with his holy spirit, make the means of grace useful to the conversion of sinners, and the promotion of his glory. It was a good day with our souls. We were well attended. Our friends seemed more than satisfied." In the year 1845 Mr Thos. Pulsford visited Bluntisham and held revival services. They resulted in many names being added to the church roll. During the nine months following his visit there were one hundred and twenty-six additions to the church. Mr Simmons observes in an entry made "Oct. 31st, 1845, Present statistics, 280 members, 230 Sabbath scholars, 4 village stations. Clear increase last year 120 members."

CHAPTER XXXII.

Frederick W. Goadby, M.A.

A change of ministers is always a time of trial to a Congregational Church, and at Bluntisham it seemed especially difficult to provide a successor to Mr Simmons after his pastorate of thirty-eight years. Yet this was accomplished with entire success, and a choice was made which resulted in a connection between pastor and people of warm affection during its whole continuance. The course taken by the church was perhaps somewhat unusual and deserving of notice. Conscious that the resources of the congregation were not sufficient to maintain in comfort a pastor with a wife and family, it was determined to seek a minister from among the young students of Regent's Park College, who had conducted the services of the chapel during the illness of Mr Simmons. This plan had the merit of giving a young minister the opportunity of gaining experience among country people, and more time for study and out-door life than when plunged at once into the bustle of a large town. It is pleasant to remember that Mr Goadby, who came straight from college, spent about eight happy and useful years at Bluntisham, and with matured knowledge and confirmed health then undertook the charge of an important congregation at Watford. Those who knew him will never remember without a touch of pain how soon a virulent fever contracted on the

Continent snatched him from the fairest prospects of usefulness and happiness.

Mr Goadby was an accomplished scholar, of which his degree as M.A. of London is a sufficient guarantee, but he was much more. His attainments had not crushed or enfeebled his imagination, and he carried his load of learning lightly. A true poet, he constantly in his sermons illustrated the truths of religion by some bright gleam of genius. Preaching on Penitence he said, "When once the tears of sorrow for sin against our Heavenly Father begin to fall, the cloud soon dissolves and the sun of his favour again shines upon us." Two at least of his hymns the world will not willingly let die, and that written for the reopening of Bluntisham meeting-house after restoration seems assured of immortality. The two concluding verses are almost perfect, and were the expression of genuine feeling. When they were sung many a tender chord became responsive to the touch of a master.

"And if our hearts to-day
Are touched with secret pain,
And thoughts of missing faces blend
With our rejoicing strain;
O let the eye of faith
That heavenly temple see,
Where, amidst holier, vaster throngs
They ever worship Thee."

Surely the humble worshippers in Bluntisham meeting-house whose passing away was lamented in these lines shared with the friend of Milton mourned as Lycidas, the honour of embalmment in true poetic verse. Mr Goadby died at Watford a few years after his removal from Bluntisham, to the great grief of all who knew him, and especially to the sorrow of the working men of his new field of labour.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Rebuilding of the Meeting-house and Purchase of the Minister's House.

The order of events is most easily shown by extracts from the chronicles in the church books. It appears that Mr Simmons made no entries in the church book subsequent to the year 1850. The next entries are made by Mr Goadby, commencing in 1868—the first year of his Pastorate, "the Rev. J. E. Simmons, M.A., having resigned the Pastorate of the church through serious illness, in the early part of the year, application was made to Mr F. W. Goadby, M.A., Student of Regent's Park College, London, to supply the pulpit for a few Sundays on the completion of his college term in July. This he did on the last Sunday in July, and first two Sundays in August. On the last of these days a meeting of the church was held, and he was asked to supply for a further period of a month, with a view to the pastorate. With this request he complied, and preached during the months of September and October. On the 11th October, after the morning service, conducted by the Rev. J. P. Campbell, of Cambridge, the sense of the congregation, and afterwards of the church—was taken respecting an invitation to Mr Goadby to become Pastor of the church. As a consequence of the resolutions then passed the following letter was written to him.

"BLUNTISHAM, *Oct.* 13th, 1868.

"My dear Sir,

Your probationary stay at Bluntisham with a view to the pastorate having expired, the pleasurable duty devolves upon me on behalf of the church and congregation, of informing you of the result of the Meeting held on Sabbath morning.

After the service was concluded, the congregation were requested to remain a short time. It was then put to the whole body by a show of hands and it was found there was a decided majority in your favour, at the same time there was a considerable minority against. After some remarks had been made, and suggestions offered, as to the desirability of unanimity, and of the minority foregoing their objections, and falling in with the majority—a motion was put, and carried, that the sense of the congregation be retaken, and it was found there was a far less minority than the first time.

The church were then requested to remain a short time, and a resolution was then put, and carried, that you be invited to take the oversight of the church. That motion was carried nem. con.; one member it is true had opposed, but before the meeting closed publicly withdrew it. And that the Great Head of the Church may guide, direct, and enable you to see your way clear, is the prayer of, yours (on behalf of the church and congregation)

Most faithfully,

JOHN C. FEARY."

"This invitation Mr Goadby gave his anxious and prayerful consideration, and on Sunday, Oct. 25th, a letter was read from him to the church and congregation, expressing his acceptance of it. On Lord's day, Nov. 8th, he entered upon his duties."

The Recognition services in connection with the settlement of Mr Goadby were held on the 27th January, 1869.

The following is a portion of the report that appeared in the "Freeman Newspaper."

"Long before the afternoon service commenced, the chapel was crowded with friends from far and near. The introductory services were conducted by the Rev. Thos. Lloyd, minister of the free church, St Ives. The Rev. W. Robinson, minister of St Andrew's Street Chapel, Cambridge, then gave an address on the nature of a Christian Church, taking the following divisions as the basis of his discourse. I. A church is a congregation. II. A true church of God is holy. III. A church should be free unto men, subject to the Lord Jesus Christ. IV. It should exist for the edification of its members, and as a witness to those around. Mr Feary, deacon, then read a very interesting statement, which included an account of the origin and rise of the church, and of the steps which led to the invitation of the new Pastor. Mr Goadby then gave some account of his Christian life, his entrance on the ministry, his views on the various doctrines held by Baptist, and other Christian bodies, and of the reasons which led to his acceptance of the Pastorate. The Rev. J. H. Millard, B.A., of Huntingdon, then offered an exceedingly suitable and earnest ordination prayer. After this the Rev. Dr Angus, President of Regent's Park College, delivered the charge to the minister, from 2 Thess. iii. 1, and at the close referred to his knowledge of Mr Goadby from his five years' residence under him as a student. The service was closed by the Rev. S. Kerry, of Calcutta. At 5 o'clock tea was provided in the school room and chapel, for the large number of visitors and friends who were present. The service in the evening was introduced by the Rev. W. E. Winks, of Wisbech, and the Rev. Jackson Goadby, of Leicester, preached a stirring sermon."

"1869, Oct. 12. A special church meeting was held this evening," to take into consideration the constitution and rule of the church, respecting the Ordinances. It was stated by the Pastor that although the church was ordinarily spoken of as a Baptist church, there was nothing in the church book to indicate that the church regarded Baptism as an essential to church fellowship. There were records of Baptisings, but the Articles of faith and practice were drawn up prior to the embracing Baptist views by Mr Coxe Feary, when in 1791 he changed his opinions on that point. The Pastor further stated, that while the practice had undoubtedly become Baptist, there had been, and were a number of members on the church books who held different views, and had been admitted without baptism. In this openness of fellowship he fully concurred, and personally, he could see no reasonable objection to its being extended to the ordinance of the Lord's supper also, so that the simple tests of membership in the church should be, "faith professed in the Lord Jesus Christ and a life consistent with such a profession."

After a discussion the church decided, "That in case of conscientious difference of opinion with regard to either ordinance, the church reserves the power to admit, or otherwise, according to the case before it, no case to be considered as a precedent for another, but each case to be considered on its own merits."

The next especial matter of interest for us is the following entry.

"1869, Dec. 15. The want of a chapel at Colne, for week evening and Sunday afternoon services, has long been felt. This year an effort has been made to erect such a place, £100 being promised to the Pastor for this purpose in the course of a few days. A building in every

way suitable, and exceedingly tasteful, has been erected, and was this day opened. Rev. J. H. Millard, B.A., of Huntingdon, preaching therein in the afternoon, and Messrs Millard, W. E. Winks, C. P. Tebbutt, W. Tebbutt, J. L. Ekins, and the Pastor, addressing a public meeting in Bluntisham Chapel in the evening."

"1871, June 15th, Thursday. The chapel which had been built at Colne, cost more than was anticipated—namely about £225—of which £100 had yet to be found—it was proposed in the early part of this year to have a Bazaar etc. in order to liquidate the debt. Great efforts had been made by the ladies of the congregation for some months, and to day a Bazaar was opened in the school-room. There were four stalls presided over by different ladies, and also music and refreshments. Visitors were numerous from all parts of the county. In the evening a sacred concert was given in the chapel, which was crowded to excess. Miss Perl, of London, Miss Tebbutt, of Nottingham, and other friends, as well as our own choir, rendered efficient service, and Neville Goodman, Esq., M.A., and the Rev. J. P. Campbell, of Cambridge, delivered addresses."

"Friday. The bazaar was again opened this afternoon and evening, and a pleasant entertainment of music, readings, etc. given for a couple of hours. The success of the effort has been in every way decided—the debt being quite cleared off, and it is expected there will be a considerable surplus."—And so the new chapel at Colne was paid for.

The next project entertained by the people was explained at a special meeting of the congregation called for August 5th 1873, to consider the propriety of purchasing a "minister's house" and of "altering the chapel."

At this meeting it was proposed to raise the sum of £1000, of which £500 was to be spent on the purchase, or building of a house, and £500 on the improvement of the chapel. Mr C. P. Tebbutt offered a house adjoining his own, with a large garden and orchard for £450. This offer was accepted, and the house agreed to be bought on behalf of the Trustees of the chapel. Since that time this house has been the house for the minister, and a very suitable pleasant house it is, some way farther up the village than the chapel or "meeting-house."

On the 9th November, 1873, Messrs John Coxe Feary, Charles Prentice Tebbutt, Charles Daintree, and William Barrett, were chosen Deacons. Mr Stephen Feary having been for the last few years the only deacon, it was thought desirable that others should share with him the labours and responsibility of this office. By December, about £1000 has been promised by members of the church and congregation and friends outside—the chapel alterations are being rapidly pushed forward—all the necessary preparations are making, and it is hoped to begin the actual renovation next May. Already, in pursuance of the scheme, a small vestry for the minister has been added to the vestry behind the chapel, and this will be all ready for use next Sunday—the first in the new year.

On New Year's Day 1874, a tea meeting was held. About two hundred and thirty people sat down to tea—addresses were delivered in the chapel by Mr Tebbutt and the Pastor. The choir sang several anthems, and Messrs Feary and H. Jackson each read appropriate selections. The tea was given by the ladies of the congregation, and the proceeds were dedicated to the building fund. It was felt that an earnest and united feeling pervaded the meeting, which augured well for the spirit

in which the various special duties of the year were to be met.

When the spring came the old meeting-house was pulled down and during all this year and into the next the workmen are all astir in the building of its successor, which is being constructed in the way most suitable to use up old materials, and so lighten the burden of heavy expenses, and the new building is to suggest the old one, so that sacred memories, happy associations and time-honoured connections may, unbroken, be passed on to the new meeting-house. So they take down the old place tenderly and reverently, respecting its cherished traditions,—its corruptible parts return to the dust, but its uncorrupted parts are renewed and reared into the perpetuation of itself. It will not be a new building, neither is it the old one,—to one who had parted from the old meeting-house in his youth—then returned to its successor in his old age, the appearance would be a puzzle—is it the same or another? The old materials, which are not perishable, have combined with new ones, and it is a resurrection. The old meeting-house is "clothed upon," and in its transformation its identity is preserved—blessed recollections, sacred traditions, hallowed associations, happy memories—these all cling to it—all that is worth preserving is there—what had decayed has passed away—"behold all things are made new." It has become an emblem of the change awaiting its old friends at present sleeping quietly around it. When the next New Year's Day came round, friends at their social tea could congratulate themselves on their nearly completed meeting-house, and so Jan. 1st, 1875, was spent thankfully and hopefully. But before the month was out, a sad farewell must be made—our old friend Mr Stephen

Feary—nephew and son-in-law to the first pastor, a link connecting us with the past, is taken away. The event is thus noticed in the church book.

"1875, Jan. 22. This day the church and congregation and many friends from a distance assembled to perform a sad and painful duty—to lay in their last resting place the earthly remains of our dear friend and helper the late Stephen Feary, who died of paralysis on the 17th instant. He joined this church in 1840, and for many years was its trusted and beloved servant, as deacon. For many years he led the prayer meetings, and 'gave out' the hymns at the Sabbath worship. But of late his sight and hearing failing him. he has been compelled to relinquish most of his more active duties. He was stricken with paralysis at St Ives market, on Monday the 4th (the previous day he had attended the three services, assisting as usual at the Lord's supper in the afternoon). He was brought home, and for a day or two seemed rallying, but a second stroke falling on the Friday, he became unconscious, and gradually sank to rest. Much sympathy is felt for his widow, who is now deprived of one with whom she has walked for nearly forty years. Mr Feary was universally beloved for his kindly and sympathetic nature. He has gone to be with Christ, which is far better." Mr Feary died in his seventy-third year.

The rebuilt meeting-house was opened on Wednesday, the 9th of June, 1875. At 12 o'clock the morning service was conducted by the Rev. J. H. Millard, B.A., of Huntingdon, and a sermon was preached by the Rev. Henry Allon, D.D., of Union Chapel, Islington. In the evening a public meeting was held at which Thomas Coote, Esq., of Fenstanton presided, and the speakers were—Rev.

J. T. Browne, of Northampton, Rev. Dr Allon, Rev. Dr Robertson, of Cambridge, Neville Goodman, Esq., M.A., of Cambridge. At the morning service a hymn composed by Mr Goadby was sung.

Our fathers' Friend and God,
In whom they live for aye,
Hear thou their children, Lord, and thine!
Be near to us this day.

Upon this hallowed spot
Thy face has often shone;
Thy Word been preached, Thy mercy felt,
Thy will with gladness done.

In faith we now renew
Our fathers' Sabbath home,
And with the memories of the past
Link all the years to come.

Grant, Lord, with this new House,
New grace our hearts to cheer,
New life within, new power without,
God of our fathers, hear!

And if our joy to-day
Be touched with secret pain,
And thoughts of missing faces blend
With our rejoicing strain.

O let the eye of faith
That Heavenly Temple see
Where, amidst holier, vaster throngs,
They ever worship thee.

The total cost of this rebuilding and purchase, including all fixtures in the meeting-house, and all repairs and alterations of the minister's house, amounted to £2307. 19*s.* 4*d.*—a large sum for an agricultural village congregation, but one which they bravely and successfully met—paying off the whole by the Midsummer of 1881. In this effort they were cordially assisted by many friends who have ever been ready to give their help to the Bluntisham church and congregation.

Mr John Wheatley the builder evinced his interest in the Meeting-house by carving in wood a beautiful frieze of grape vine, leaves and fruit, with other designs to surround the inside of the roof. Its height removes it so far from the eye, that much of the beauty of the design and excellence of the execution are missed except by a very careful examination.

Mr Tebbutt contributed to the beauty of the place by giving two stained glass windows, which were placed in the wall on either side of the pulpit, illustrating the childhood of Christ when conversing with the doctors in the Temple, and Christ in his manhood, blessing the children. These were extra gifts—the generous expressions of the deep interest the donors felt in the restoration of their village meeting-house. Other special gifts were made to complete the convenience and beauty of the building.

On the 5th March, 1876, a communication was made to the church occasioning deep regret. "After the ordinance of the Lord's supper this afternoon, the pastor stated that he had come to the conclusion—of which they were not altogether ignorant—that the time had now come when duty impelled him to seek some wider sphere of labour. He had spent more than seven happy and profitable years at Bluntisham, and received great kindness and sympathy on all hands; but the way had now opened for him to follow the late Mr Best in the pastorate of the church at Watford, and he felt it to be his duty to accept the call. He laid his resignation of the pastorate before the church, intimating that he had arranged with the deacons to remain at Bluntisham over the first Lord's day in May."

On the proposal of Mr C. P. Tebbutt, seconded by

Mr C. Daintree, Mr Goadby's resignation was accepted, and the following resolution respecting it carried unanimously. "That in accepting Mr Goadby's resignation of the pastorate of this church, the members present wish to express their full and unabated confidence in him as a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, their thankfulness for the blessing which has attended his labours during his seven years' stay with them, and their earnest prayer that God will bless him in the fresh field of work to which he is going."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The decade before the Centenary.

The Rev. F. W. Goadby, M.A., having accepted the invitation of the church at Watford to become their Pastor, application was made to Mr J. Foster Makepeace, student of Regent's Park College, London, to supply the pulpit with a view to the pastorate. This he did, first for two Sundays in March and April, and then for four Sundays in May and June.

At a church meeting held, "a resolution moved by Mr Mortlock and seconded by Mr J. C. Feary was unanimously passed by the church, and subsequently confirmed by the congregation, that Mr Makepeace be invited to the pastorate." The following letter is the embodiment of that resolution.

"Bluntisham, near St Ives, *June 15th*, 1876.

Dear Mr Makepeace,

I am requested by the Deacons, to inform you that an unanimous vote of the church and congregation at Bluntisham, has authorized them to invite you to become their Pastor, if arrangements can be made of a kind satisfactory to both parties. Will you please let me know as early as you can, what are your feelings as to this most important matter. Praying that you, and we, may be guided aright, believe me, dear Mr Makepeace,

Yours faithfully,

C. P. Tebbutt."

To this letter Mr Makepeace replied:

"REGENT'S PARK COLLEGE, *June 16th*, 1876.

My dear Friends,

I hasten to reply as soon as possible to your kind invitation to me to become your pastor. I have but one answer to give—and I trust it is the answer of many prayers and much thought—namely, a very cordial acceptance of your call.

I do this, believe me, with much fear and trembling, feeling deeply my own weakness; and yet with all boldness, being assured it is the Master's will. None will be more conscious than I, that it will be a long time ere I fill, in any measure, Mr Goadby's place; long ere I do the work as effectually, long ere I win your esteem and affection as completely, as he has done; and yet I shall come knowing—and strong in the knowledge—that I can trust in your kindness, and patience and sympathy, as I take up the work which for so many years has so faithfully been carried on at Bluntisham.

From what I have seen of you and your work, I gather abundant cause for hopefulness. If a church at peace with itself, and a people with 'a mind to work,' and a good field of labour, be guarantees, under God's blessing, of a happy and successful ministry, I shall have those guarantees at Bluntisham. And I do pray, dear friends, that my coming among you may be for our mutual welfare, that we may become 'Co-workers with God,' 'being stablished and built up' in the faith, and together contending with heart and hand, by a pure and holy example, and by earnest activity in the Master's service, to extend the bounds of Messiah's Kingdom.

I do not apprehend that your subsequent arrangements will affect this my answer. Those arrangements I leave in your hands, though of course I should like to be apprised of them at your earliest convenience.....And now, dear friends, I

commend you to the protection and guidance of Him who is alone the Keeper and Leader of Israel.

I remain, yours in sincerity,

J. F. MAKEPEACE."

"The arrangements subsequently made were as follows." "The fixed salary of the Pastor to be £120 per annum, payable quarterly, minister to have use of house and small garden at the back.....Three months' notice of any change in the pastorate to be given, and arrangements made for a few weeks' holiday in the year."

Mr Makepeace commenced his ministry on Sunday, July 23rd, 1876.

The following entry gives a short account of the Recognition services.

"1877, April 10th. To-day services were held in connection with the settlement of J. F. Makepeace at Bluntisham.

In the afternoon, the Rev. F. W. Goadby, M.A., the late minister, preached an excellent sermon from Jerem. xx. 9. At five o'clock tea was provided in the schoolroom, of which about three hundred persons partook. In the evening a public meeting was held in the chapel, which was crowded with friends from far and near. The chair was taken by F. Warren, Esq., of St Ives. The Revs. J. Angus, D.D., J. M. Millard, B.A., T. Lloyd, F. W. Goadby, M.A., S. H. Firks, and J. F. Makepeace, and C. P. Tebbutt, Esq. took part in the proceedings. It was the general feeling of the friends that a very happy day had been spent."

"On the 6th day of June following, the annual meeting of the Hunts. Association of Christian Churches was held at Bluntisham. In the morning at 11.45, a

sermon was preached in the chapel by the Rev. J. Brown, B.A., of Bedford. At half-past one o'clock a cold collation was served in a tent in Mr Tebbutt's paddock. A meeting for business was held at three o'clock. Tea was provided at five o'clock, and a public meeting was held at six o'clock. Speakers: Rev. J. Brown, B.A., Messrs Bateman Brown, Thos. Coote, J. R. Wilkinson and Milligan of Dean; C. P. Tebbutt, Esq., presided. The meeting was felt by all to have been a very happy and successful one."

"1878, Feb. 21st. This evening we held a members' tea meeting. About ninety friends sat down to tea at six o'clock. After tea a social meeting was held in the Vestry, the Pastor presiding. Speeches were delivered by Messrs C. P. Tebbutt, J. W. Jewson, Chas. Daintree, Wm. Barrett, Stephen Butcher, Philip Newman and John Ellis. A most harmonious, enjoyable and profitable evening was spent."

Each year during Mr Makepeace's pastorate, the customary new year's tea meeting was held, at which the members of the church gathered for a social evening.

And each year, about Midsummer, anniversary services were held in the chapel.

On the 29th Dec. 1881, "Two new deacons were elected, viz. Mr James Mortlock, of Pidley, and Mr Henry Jackson, of Earith."

The anniversary service held on the 14th June, 1881, must have special notice, for it was accompanied by an announcement that, as the result of extra efforts, they were quite out of debt—having now defrayed all the expenses incurred by the spirited movements of 1874—5, when the Meeting-house was rebuilt and the Parsonage purchased. Another important anniversary is thus recorded in the church book.

"1882, June 13th. Anniversary services were held to-day.—Preacher in the afternoon Rev. G. S. Barrett, B.A. of Norwich.—Tea under tent at 5.—Meeting in chapel at 7. Chairman, H. Goodman, Esq., of St Ives. Speakers—Mr Barrett of Norwich, and Rev. J. Mc Clure of Sawston. There was a large attendance, and a very pleasant day was spent, despite the persistent and heavy rain that fell. During the day a bazaar was held in the school-room, which was prettily decorated for the occasion. The object was to pay for the repainting of the Manse."

"June 14th. The Bazaar was reopened to-day at 2 o'clock. It was crowded all day. At 5 o'clock a public tea was provided in the tent. It was estimated that 350 sat down to tea. At 7 o'clock an entertainment of music, singing etc. was held in the Bazaar room. The Bazaar was a thorough success, realizing over £70."

"June 22nd. This evening some friends met in the chapel by invitation of the Bazaar Committee, and with some kindly and appreciative words, spoke of the pastor's work among them, and presented him with a silk bag containing £30. Mr Makepeace, in thanking the friends spoke of the past six years, and of the joy and satisfaction his ministry at Bluntisham had given him, expressed the belief and hope that it would be increasingly so in the future."

"Aug. 5th. This afternoon was buried Mrs Stephen Feary. She survived her husband seven years. She had been ailing for a long time, and died in perfect peace, greatly lamented and beloved. She will be greatly missed for her good Christian character and kindly sympathetic nature."

Mr Makepeace thus refers to her in the sermon he preached on the 6th Aug. 1882, the day after her burial,

"She was the honoured bearer of an honoured name, a worthy daughter of a worthy father. We shall not soon forget the purity and tenacity of her religious faith—the fulness of her trust in Christ—the strength of her attachment to all that was lovely and pure and honest and of good report. The poor will remember her and bless her memory. This church will miss her, for although of late years she has been confined to her house; yet though not in body, she has always been with us in spirit, and who can tell what ministries of love the spirit world serves? As to her faults—I think of what Bolingbroke said of Marlborough, 'He was a brave soldier, and I have forgotten all his faults'—I say, 'She was a good woman, a kind mother, a true friend, and I have forgotten all her faults.'" Mrs Feary died Aug. 1st, 1882, in the seventy-fifth year of her age, in the same house in which her father, the good old minister, was born, and where he had lived and died. She was buried with her husband in the meeting burial-ground. Here we will record the death of Miss Simmons, the sister of the Rev. John Edmund Simmons, M.A., the late pastor. Miss Simmons, who had occupied the house at the top of the road where it turns to the right and left—to Woodhurst and to Colne—died March 6th, 1880, aged 87 years, and was buried in the meeting-house burial-ground.

Mr Makepeace thus refers to her, in the funeral sermon he preached on Sunday morning, March 14th: "As to her earthly course, it needs not that I should record her faithful, consistent Christian character, for it is indelibly recorded—personal observation of her walk and conversation has recorded it on your memories and your hearts. Her kindly solicitude for others, that instinct of protection which Paul had, and which God gives to some

men and women as truly as he gives to others an instinct to seek protection, was very remarkable. She was good to all, with that thoughtful consideration which is the rarest type of a generous nature. The later years of her life were spent in much suffering—suffering, indeed, such as few here have any realisation of, but which she endured with a cheerful and submissive patience to the end. And how clear, how active, how versatile her mind was, I can testify. There are one or two in this congregation now who will remember the circumstances that have led me to select my present text—'Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.' This fourth verse was always perplexing her; her mind was ever reverting to it, trying to understand it. Again and again she has appealed to me for its interpretation, but I never was able to satisfy her though I tried my best. She stumbled upon the word 'upon.' 'Upon what,' she said, 'clothed upon *what?*' And once I told her that when she went to heaven she must ask Paul what it meant, and whether he could recal what he was thinking of when he wrote it. How she laughed! There was no forced solemnity, no straitened dread, in her anticipation of death, and she died as peacefully as if she were only tired and slept awhile." Miss Simmons before she died made the handsome gift of two hundred pounds towards providing a minister's house, and we have seen how all her wishes for it were fulfilled in its completion.

The entries in the church book will best explain the dissolution of the bonds between the pastor and people at Bluntisham.

"1882, Sep. 24th. At the close of the morning's service, Mr Makepeace placed his resignation in the hands

of the Deacons, asking them to communicate it to the church at the earliest opportunity."

"Oct. 1st. To-day, after the Communion service, the following letter was read from Mr Makepeace to the church :—

"To the members of the Church :—

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I have asked the Deacons to place before you my resignation of the ministry in this place, but I felt I should also like to address a few words to you by letter :—You are aware that I have accepted an unanimous invitation to the Co-pastorate of Dr Cox's church at Nottingham. A little explanation of this somewhat sudden step is needed, especially as, on June the 22nd, when you so kindly and generously presented me with a purse of gold, I expressed my fixed determination to remain with you for some years to come. That was my sincere desire and determination at that time, and I had then no thought at all of leaving you. About the middle of July, however, I received the first intimation of some wish at Nottingham that I should remove thither. Advantageous offers and suggestions were made to me of a character which affected very closely some work on which I am now especially engaged, accompanied by very cordial overtures towards a settlement there. No step was then taken beyond my promise to preach for them on the 10th of Sept.; I did so, and shortly afterwards I received a hearty and unanimous invitation, which, as I have said, I accepted. And now it remains but for me to ask you to accept my resignation of my position here as your minister. I cannot tell you with what soreness of heart at the prospect of leaving you, with what deep affection for you all, with what continued and strengthened desire for your prosperity as a church, I do so. You all know, without my telling you, how I have loved to work here, and how happy the years have been to me, that have passed away since 1876, when I first became your Pastor. To me

they have been what I feel will prove the most peaceful years of my life. I cherish the hope that they have not been altogether unfruitful years to you. To you, to the members of the Congregation, and to the children and young men and maidens who have gathered round me, I would say from my heart, "God be with you." The Deacons will inform you what arrangements have been made for the few remaining weeks of my stay here, and for a few weeks beyond. Believe me ever to remain, my dear Friends, yours very affectionately,

J. Foster Makepeace."

The following resolution, proposed by Mr Mortlock, and seconded by Mr J. C. Feary, was carried unanimously:—

"The church assembling at Bluntisham Meeting-house, having received from their pastor, the Rev. J. Foster Makepeace, a letter stating his intention to accept a call to a Co-pastorate with Dr Cox at Nottingham, wish, in accepting his resignation, to assure him of their high regard and affection, and their cordial good wishes for his prosperity and happiness in the fresh field of work he has felt it his duty to undertake."

And so the pastor left for a fresh field of labour, and the people must seek another to fill the place amongst them which Mr Makepeace has vacated.

After several months' interval, during which time the pulpit was supplied in various ways, it was arranged at a church meeting, held June 17th, 1883, to invite Mr Bryan, of the Pastors' College, London, to preach for the next three Sundays.

"At a church meeting held July 8th, Mr Bloomfield proposed and Mr Humphrey seconded, 'That an invitation be given to Mr Bryan to take the Pastorate at Christmas.' —Carried unanimously."

"At a church meeting, held after the communion service, the first Sunday in August, Mr Bryan's letter, accepting the pastorate, was read, the conditions of which the church agreed to." The letter was as follows:

"Bristol, *July 18th*, 1883.

C. P. Tebbutt, Esq.

My dear Sir,

Your letter conveying the church's invitation has received considerable thought, and my mind has been prayerfully exercised as to how I should respond to it. I may now put my resolve into the words of David, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." You are aware that I have had but two years in college and greatly desired three, but the following considerations have led me to obey your call, believing it to be of God. The invitation being quite unanimous—a willingness on the part of the church to wait until January for the commencement of my pastoral duties—that facility will be afforded me for continuing my studies.

There are many details concerning my relationship with you that I am leaving to your Christian generosity. I trust we are entering upon a period of happy and successful work together. May the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us and establish the work of our hands.

Yours sincerely,

W. Colin Bryan."

Mr Wyndham Colin Bryan entered upon the duties of the pastorate on the sixth of January, 1884. The public recognition of this fact was made on the 4th of April following, when numerous friends gathered to evince the interest they took in the new connection formed between the young pastor and the church and congregation. In the afternoon of the day, at half-past three, service was conducted by the Rev. T. Lloyd, of St Ives, and a sermon

preached by the Rev. W. R. Skerry, of London, from 1 Peter i. 5, 6, 7, which rivetted the attention of the large congregation assembled on the occasion. At half-past five a public tea was provided, when the large schoolroom and the vestries of the chapel were filled to overflowing. In the evening a public meeting was held, presided over by Henry Goodman, Esq., of St Ives. A very large company were present, including many ministers and friends from the neighbouring towns and villages. The chairman's address was most appropriate for the occasion, bearing on the relations between the pulpit and the pew. Mr Jackson, on behalf of the church, stated the circumstances which had led to the call of Mr Bryan to the pastorate, and then Mr Bryan related the reasons which had induced him to enter the ministry and to accept the invitation to take charge of the church. The charge to the Pastor was delivered by the Rev. Professor Gracey, Principal of Mr Spurgeon's Pastors' College, and was founded upon the words from Heb. xiii. 17, "Watch for your souls." The subject was dealt with in a masterly manner, making a deep impression on all who heard it. The charge to the church was given by the Rev. W. R. Skerry, who laid before them their duty to their pastor—what they might expect from him, and what he might expect from them. The ordination prayer was offered by the Rev. H. Bell, of Houghton. The other ministers who took part in the meeting were the Revs. T. A. Smith, of Haddenham, W. Hetherington, of Ramsey, R. S. Latimer, of Willingham, and J. Briggs, of Shoreham, who gave hearty words of welcome and congratulation to the church over which Mr Bryan had become pastor. It was the general impression of those who were present that very pleasant and successful services had been held.

Since this time the usual annual gatherings of the church members at tea, and the anniversary services have taken place. The work of the Church is being carried on in a happy spirit of unity by the combined, earnest, persevering efforts of Pastor and people, which augurs well for the future usefulness of the Church.

On the 28th of Dec. 1886, the members of the church met at tea in the schoolroom to commemorate the formation of the church one hundred years before that day. After tea a meeting was held, over which Mr C. P. Tebbutt presided. "Addresses were given by Messrs Tebbutt, Jackson and Wheatley. Mr John Feary read a part of the late Coxe Feary's life, and the Pastor spoke of the circumstances under which the Church was formed. Brother M. Pedley closed with prayer what was felt to be a very pleasant meeting."

The general desire of the Church and Congregation to distinguish the year of the centenary by some useful memorial, led them to decide to alter and enlarge the schoolroom, in order to add to its convenience and comfort, by replacing the brick floor with a wooden one, adding a new room to the east end and improving the interior so as to render it a convenient room for the Sunday School, and for general village requirements. These and other beneficial arrangements have all been carried out in a substantial and tasteful way—at a cost of somewhat over three hundred pounds. Arrangements have been made to celebrate the centenary by a public meeting to be held on the 25th of May of this year, 1887. This book also is a consequence of the centenary arrangements.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Conclusion.

The religion taught by Jesus Christ was characterized by perfect simplicity. Regardless of form and ceremony, the Founder of the Christian religion declares that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." He separates his religion from all that is external, and declares it to be independent of ritual[1]. He does this by simply teaching and shewing its nature. This unworldly, pure spirituality, has been a "stone of stumbling and rock of offence," through the eighteen centuries which have intervened between the times of his immediate followers and ourselves. In all times the professors of this religion have sought out many inventions, by which they thought to accelerate the advance of religion, agreeably to their own notion of what would be to its advantage. Kings undertook to nurse it, and the church thankfully accepted their protection. Then what was

[1] It may be urged that most Christians have accepted the Lord's Supper and Baptism as sacraments enjoined by our Lord. The absence of careful direction as to the observance of the one, and the fact that our Lord did not practise the other—baptism—and that Paul felt relieved that he had practised it so little—seem to leave them both as matters of expediency. The opinion of the Society of Friends—and some others—appears to the writer the most Christian view of the matter. R. W. D.

heavenly became earthly. High ceremony—gorgeous vestments—stately ritual—imposing processions—rich music—magnificent temples—and what was worse than all—sacerdotal pretensions to a sacrificial priesthood so overlaid it, that the religious ceremony of worship became a parody of the religion of the Founder of Christianity. The highest art is characterized by simplicity, by severe chasteness of style. The beauty which distinguishes it is in its adaptation to its purpose and in its naturalness; that which is fictitious and artificial, having no corresponding use or purpose, is incompatible with true art. When the early English style of architecture passed into the "Decorated," and became overladen with ornament, it was appropriately styled the "Debased." When men do not understand the "raison d'être" of a thing—when they cannot recognize the principles on which it is founded—they are misled into all manner of vagaries, until at length, what they are upholding is discovered to be but a travesty of what was once reality. So men having failed to appreciate the fundamental principles of Christianity—unable to grasp its pure spirituality, and its entire independence of outward form—defiled its simplicity by forms and ceremonies—overlaid it with gorgeous ritual, and debased it by sacerdotalism. They say these are only aids to worship. If that be the case, they are so misleading, so apt to engross the attention, and become the object of worship, that it is imprudent to adopt them. Not only have these erroneous conceptions pervaded the Romish church, and to a lesser degree the Anglican church, but even Nonconformists are not free from them. We say that we erect handsome and ornamented buildings, "*for the glory of God.*"—But already "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." The only things not His are the

affections and worship of His children's hearts—these are His only as we give them. If the motive originating the grand temple be love—the love is a worthy gift which finds its expression in ministering to the pleasure we take in the beautiful, but to speak of it as adding to the glory of God is incorrect and misleading.

There has been a strain of puritanism, running through the ages, always protesting ~~either~~ against the worldly and sensuous debasement of the Christian religion. Sometimes it has been prominent enough to be noticed in history, as in the Waldenses and Albigenses—the Hussites in Germany, and the Moravians—in the Wiclifites of England, and their Lollard successors, and in the Tudor and Stuart Puritans. Possessing a clearer idea of the religion of Christ than others, they strove to regain the primitive simplicity of the original teaching of Christ. The Nonconformists who succeeded the Puritans—notably the Congregationalists, and above all the Quakers—continued the endeavour to revive the pristine purity and simplicity of Christianity. Through much suffering have the Free Churches—of course including the Quakers—held their puritan principles, and by heroic steadfastness, wrung from a reluctant Church and State, liberty, with freedom of thought and action; and as they gained a clearer and truer perception of Christ's method, they gradually sought the more complete disentanglement of religion from connexion with the state; and they now await with confidence, the consummation of their long and hard struggle, when no individual will be placed in a better or worse position, on account of the opinions he holds with regard to religion.

The church at Bluntisham has its place in the honourable position occupied by the Free churches of England.

For a hundred years, our Nonconforming Brethren at Bluntisham have shown that the work of Jesus Christ can be carried on without help or pay from the State. Liberty —religious and civil—the freedom of the individual in thought and action have been upheld, and in spite of civil and religious disabilities, they took their independent stand, held their own views, and pursued their own way, guided by their religious instincts—derived from their knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of His religion as set forth in the Scriptures.

Our Nonconformist Churches have had to struggle with many difficulties. To an extent not easily estimated the nation is indebted to the Free Churches of our villages and country towns. The Nonconformist Church at Bluntisham instilled into the minds of the youth of several generations reared within its influence principles of right and much of God's truth. To them the simple gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached. They have been led into wisdom's path, and guided in the way of righteousness. Habits have been formed—associations made—which will be perpetuated through generations yet unborn, and in countries scarcely known. The great cities of our land have profited by the living influence of truth disseminated by the Bluntisham Nonconformist Church—truth which has been felt in our colonies and in many other parts of the earth. In large towns those on whom the churches there have exercised a beneficial influence often remain to be the strength and support of those churches, but in our village communities those whom they have influenced go forth from their homes and become the bone and sinew and the sustaining strength of the churches of our great towns and cities, and of our world-wide colonial life. Truly they become the salt of the earth. In

every place it requires faith and patience to labour on, but in our little country churches more than common self-abnegation and disinterestedness are needed. The strain of puritanism is preserved by the free church communities scattered about our land. Within them free thought, independent judgment and unfettered action are encouraged; the drawbacks are the evils incident to liberty, and these are less dangerous than those incident to slavery. The free exercise of the intellectual and moral powers of men promotes their growth—adds to their moral and intellectual health and to the measure of their strength. With such an environment we are more likely to get freshness of thought, new ideas and greater originality, less subserviency to errors bound to us by habit, less tendency to travel in deep-worn ruts. This healthy surrounding of freedom keeps the heart and mind more open and ready to receive light, as God in his many ways fulfils his purposes to us. Nor is this free atmosphere incompatible with conservatism. What we can receive of truth and right is still rendered more sacred by long tradition, by hallowed association, and cherished memories. The simple truths of the Bible, the stories of the Old and New Testaments, are still woven into our lives, intertwined with our parents' love, and the brightness and sweetness of home.

At the present time our Country Free Churches are in great need of sympathy and help. They are feeling the effects of the present terrible agricultural depression, and beside the poverty consequent on this, they are contending with the gradual depopulation of our purely agricultural districts, and the distress which this entails on many of their supporters. The long continuance of these troubles, their aggravation as time lengthens, instead of

the amelioration long hoped for, is a source of great and increasing anxiety. These struggling village churches claim all the help which can be given them in word and deed. To give this wisely without weakening self-respect and therefore self-help, is however no easy task, and we earnestly hope that the next record of Village Life at Bluntisham will tell of returning prosperity to our Village Religious Communities.

PASTORS OF BLUNTISHAM NONCONFORMIST CONGREGATION.

Coxe Feary	1787.
Samuel Green	1818.
J. Edmund Simmons, M.A.	1830.
F. W. Goadby, M.A., Lond.	1868.
J. Foster Makepeace	1876.
W. Colin Bryan	1884.

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